

DEUS
VULT

LORD OF MISRULE



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Verse 5.0

INTRODUCTION



This adventure follows on from *The Heresiarch of Troyes*. The spirit, still in the body of the leper Jacques Taillebois, escaped from the Chateau du Paynes via the secret tunnel. Instead of returning to Troyes, the Joyous One set off for the coast.

The Joyous One needs Magic Points to survive. In Troyes, it was able to feed off its cult. It created the new Heresiarch to provide it with a constant supply of food but the characters foiled that scheme. It can still survive on the vestiges of the cult and those it seduces on the road but the more damage the characters do to its cult, the more desperate the spirit becomes. If the characters fail to complete any of the adventures along the way, the final battle against the Joyous One will be much harder.

The Chase Begins

The characters learn of their mission and set off in pursuit of the Joyous One.

The Cursed Tower of Provins

The Joyous One drives a priest insane, causing a mob to attack a wizard's tower. The characters must discern who the madmen are and deal with the threat of the ancient ghoulish colony under the city.

Death of a Hermit

In Orleans, at the Monastery of Saint-Mesmin, the characters must solve the mysterious death of James the Hermit, who was murdered by a follower of the Joyous One... or so it would seem. There is more to this tale than simple madness.

The Harvest

A chance encounter on the road leads the characters to a tiny hamlet, where a god older than civilisation slumbers in the fields. The desperate Joyous One intends to wake the Shambler and bring unparalleled destruction upon all of Anjou.

The Feast of Fools

Finally, the characters reach the town of Saint-Nazaire only a few hours behind the Joyous One. There, they discover that the spirit has expended much of its power to create a zone of utter madness in the town. The characters must plunge into the afflicted region and defeat the Abbot of Unreason so they can pursue the Joyous One... and their pursuit ends in the most unlikely place of all.

Travel Times

While characters can travel approximately 30 kilometres a day on foot, or twice that on horseback, their progress is impeded by having to search for signs of the Joyous One. Their quarry may double back, take twisting, hazardous routes or lead them into dangerous wild woods.

As a rule of thumb, the travel times between adventures are listed in the following table but the GM should adjust these to suit the actions of the characters. The distances are not as the crow flies; they take into account the winding roads and the difficulty of travel, too.

Troyes to Provins: 75 km (2.5 days)

Provins to Orleans: 165 km (5.5 days)

Orleans to Yves-Sur-Fleuve: 165 km (5.5 days)

Yves-Sur-Fleuve to Saint Nazaire: 210 km (7 days)

Verse 5.1

THE CHASE BEGINS



August, and the fields of France wave green and golden in the hot sun. The harvest is coming in across the countryside, full and bountiful, and it will be a soft winter. With no looming threat of famine, the land seems to almost glow with joy and optimism. The birds sing sweetly in the heavens to their mates and young shepherds sing enthusiastically, if not sweetly, to their loves below.

The Order trained you to look beneath the surface, to see the skull beneath the skin. This vitality and joy is unnatural, an emotional cancer that rots the soul from within. Something terrible is loose in the world and it must be destroyed.

A day ago, you brought down the Heresiarch of Troyes and put an end to the sinful gospel of Joy that he preached – but the spirit that inspired his evil is still loose. The Joyous One has not been seen since the Templars captured it at the Leperserie des Deux Eaux. Your new task is to recapture the Joyous One.

Leaving Troyes

Depending on the events of *The Heresiarch of Troyes*, the characters may still have allies in Troyes, or they may be fleeing the town with an angry mob on their heels. If they have allies, they can get horses and supplies in Troyes before departing.

Following the Joyous One

There are several ways that the characters can pick up the trail of the Joyous One.

From The Hunting Lodge

The last trace the characters had of Jacques Taillebois was at the Chateau du Paynes, so they can return to that cursed castle and search for clues. The secret escape tunnel leads from the dungeons of the keep, under the walls and out into the forest. In several places, the tunnel is so narrow that the characters must crawl through the passageway. A successful Perception test lets a character find some torn flesh on a jagged outcropping – the leper must have brushed against this rock as he pushed through the tunnel.

The tunnel ends in a small hunting lodge – a stone-walled cabin in the middle of the forest. There were horses stabled outside but they are long gone. A Track roll allows the characters to find a trail of hoofprints leading off to the west, as if heading for the road to Paris instead of directly to Troyes. Increase the difficulty to Difficult (-20%) if the characters are here a day after the Joyous One fled; Hard (-40%) if they are here within a week and Formidable (-80%) after that.

Once the characters reach the road, they can ask passers-by and traders for more clues.

Jerome's Spell of Divination

The spell of divination that Jerome of Aquitaine created can be used to locate the spirit but it is unreliable. The ritual does not require any knowledge of sorcery to perform but costs one Magic Point and requires a Lore (Occult) roll. The difficulty of this test is modified by the distance to the target and by environmental factors.

The spell requires several minutes of patient meditation from the caster. It takes about half an hour to fully complete the ritual. The components are a pendulum and a magical connection to the target – Jerome used a fragment from the Joyous One's jar but the characters could also use a piece of the Joyous One's clothing, a drop of blood, a leper mask or some other token.

If the spell fails, the pendulum does not move. A successful Lore test gives a rough indication of direction to the spirit; a critical success gives a more precise reading. If the character fumbles the roll, the pendulum moves in the wrong direction.

Rumours on the Road

The roads around Troyes are still busy with merchants coming and going to the Fair, so the characters can scour the highways for rumours. Fortunately, their quarry is an easily recognisable one, even without his grinning leathery mask – just ask if anyone has seen a madman with no nose, riding a stolen horse.

A few passing traders do report seeing a man dressed in rags riding along the road to Provins. The chase begins there.

Modifier	Range	Environmental Factors
+40%	Within 1 km	'Magical cleanroom' – no disruptions whatsoever
+20%	Within 5 km	Isolated location, clear skies, no other sources of magic
+0%	Within 10 km	Average conditions
-20%	Within 20 km	In bad weather or a place where there was once magic or violent emotion
-40%	Within 40 km	In the presence of a magic item or enchanted place
-60%	Within 80 km	In the presence of active sorcery or during especially foul weather
-80%	Within 160 km	In a place created to baffle detection

Starting from the Mont St. Michel

The chase begins at the Mont St. Michel. Read the following to the players:

The bell tolls, calling you to the church. Waiting for you there is Basilio de Rossi, the Cardinal Obscure of the Order. He leans against a pillar with a grim expression on his face. Standing at his side is an older man with a wild beard who leans on a gnarled staff of wood. The incense burning in the censers by the altar cannot wholly mask the animal stench of the older man.

Basilio greets you with a nod. 'This is Edric, the Prior of Lihou. He comes with a grave warning for us.'

Edric surveys you with sullen eyes. 'These are what you give me, de Rossi? These weak-willed children? Did you not listen to a word I said? It is loose, de Rossi and it is moving.'

The Cardinal Obscure continues. 'Edric's spells of divination have sensed a presence that is a threat to all Christendom. It is a spirit of some sort, one whose power increases with each passing day. It must be dealt with while it is still weak, before it has a chance to grow. I can spare no other monks to help you and you can spare no time – find this spirit and destroy it. Take what you need from the armoury but be swift.'

The old hermit addresses you again, or perhaps he speaks without seeing you. 'I saw a pagan feast, Saturnalia, filled with lewd acts and madness. I looked in my pool and I saw these things, across the leagues and across the gulf of time. They captured the spirit in a jar and buried it in a secret place, and there it rested for two dozen generations until some poor fool found it. I saw him, watched him from afar as he opened the jar. Did he think it held gold or precious stones? Fool. Such things are worthless in death and death was in the jar.'

It took him, body and soul, and made of him a steed of flesh for the spirit to ride. It looked back at me then, and it saw me, through my pool. It knows it is being hunted.'

Edric's head snaps upright and he fixes you with his gaze. 'I am the hunter of ghosts and ye shall be my dogs. Take this pendulum – I have enchanted it to point the way to the spirit, no matter what body it wears or what form it takes. Ride now to Provins, in the county of Champagne and find the spirit there. Kill it... if you can.'

Verse 5.2

THE CURSED TOWER OF PROVINS



The characters arrive in Provins, the other great town of Champagne. Like Troyes, Provins is a Fair town – twice a year, merchants come from all over Europe to trade here. The next Fair in Provins is not until September but already the town is beginning to prepare. The great square of St. Quirinace will soon be thronged with the same sorts of hawkers, barkers, traders, bankers – and Templars – that are currently filling the streets of Troyes.

There are passageways under Provins, miles upon miles of twisting secret tunnels that worm their way into the hillside on which the city stands. Some were Roman catacombs turned into hidden refuges for heretics like the Cathars but the oldest tunnels are not dug by human hands. The ghouls were here long before Provins was settled by humans.

Hernaudin the Necromancer

If any man in Provins knows this, it is Hernaudin the Necromancer. He was an initiate at the great Benedictine monastery of Cluny until he found a book of occult lore in the recesses of the library there. He stole the book and fled the monastery. Through the use of necromancy, he became powerful and wealthy, taking up residence in Provins some 30 years ago to study. His tower, called the Crow Tower, stands at the heart of the city, close to the market.

Although he is a necromancer, Hernaudin bears little ill will towards the common folk of the city. He committed vile deeds in his youth but today he is a peaceful scholar for the most part, bent on establishing communications with the ghouls who dwell far beneath the city streets. He married a woman of good standing in the town, has invested his money in several profitable businesses and is generally seen as an eccentric instead of a suspicious occultist.

Father Milon

If the life of a man is a candle that burns down through the years, then the candle of Father Milon is a fingers-breadth of wax topped with a guttering flame. He is over 60 years old and will not last another winter. Death is coming for him and he knows it. The cold wind of mortality blows through his soul and his faith was too weak to endure. As his own death approaches, the words of prayer and comfort have turned to ashes in his mouth.

Milon has long suspected Hernaudin of being in league with the devil – the rich burgher is simply too well preserved and ever-youthful to be wholly natural. His suspicions were nothing more than idle, jealous thoughts until he encountered the Joyous One. The spirit inspired the old priest, driving him insane.

Now, he believes that the Necromancer must die.

The Spirit's Scheme

The Joyous One knows it is being pursued, so it concocted a scheme to delay the guardian priests. After giving Father Milon his heart's desire by rekindling his faith and turning him into a fanatical believer, the Joyous One kidnapped two children and hid them away, then put the seed of doubt in the priest's mind that Hernaudin was responsible for the loss of the children. The priest will call upon the Order and the Order will be drawn into a fruitless battle with the Necromancer and his ghoulish allies.

Arrival in Provins

The characters arrive in Provins at nightfall, after the guards have closed the city gates for the night. The characters can either beg the guards for entry, find a barn or a hedge to sleep in, or try to sneak over the city walls. If they do sleep outside, then they are likely to find a campsite close to one of the hidden entrances into the tunnels under Provins, in which case they may hear ghouls meeping and

The Ghoul Idol

If the characters are still carrying the ghoulish idol recovered from the dig in Paris, the situation with the ghouls of Provins changes greatly. The ghouls are drawn to the idol and, like the ghouls of Paris, want to bind a human to the idol's spirit and then imprison that human in a coffin to be the spirit's mouthpiece. They are intrigued by the fact that a human is carrying the idol in the first place and will watch the bearer of the idol to determine if he is a friend to the under-people or a vile killer of the dead. To the ghouls, the situation is analogous to a stranger carrying a Christian relic; is the stranger a friend to the faith who deserves to bear the relic, or is he a thief and murderer who looted the relic

The characters may be able to trade the idol to the ghouls in exchange for their help if they establish friendly relations with the monsters; if they prove hostile, then some unfortunate character may end up locked in a coffin for eternity.

chattering in the night. The ghouls will stay well away from the characters and will not be encountered at this point in the scenario – this is just foreshadowing.

Once the characters get into town, they can either look for lodgings, the support of the Church or search for signs of their quarry. Lodgings are easy to find – half the townsfolk are in Troyes this month, so the inns are empty and there are plenty of rooms. Penurious characters can take shelter in various cheap hostels or on the streets.

Provins is part of the diocese of Troyes, so there is no bishop in the town. The characters can approach any of the churches and monasteries and use the Blessed Rings to demand aid. If they take this approach, then you can use it to introduce Father Milon – he is the first priest they make contact with.

Searching for the Joyous One

The characters may try to find rumours or clues leading to the Joyous One. A successful Streetwise or Influence test gets a few potential leads:

- No-one matching the description of Jacques Taillebois has been seen. The guards certainly do not recall any masked or leprous horseman arriving on the road from Troyes.
- *'Strange events? Some priest over by the market was ranting about missing children, but that's not exactly... strange. A few lambs go missing every spring, but in the autumn, it's always children. We find the bones sometimes. No-one knows who – or what – takes them. Best not to think about it.'*
- *'Madmen? Heretics? Not in Provins... no matter what they say about the Crow Tower.'*

On a critical success, the characters do pick up a vital clue:

- *A group of travelling players came through the town a few days' ago. They put on a mystery play in the town square. I heard it was a bit strange. Some of them players were masked, weren't they Francois?*

Father Milon's Plea

Father Milon can approach the characters as they explore the streets of Provins, or they can pass his church and overhear his fire-and-brimstone sermon about the missing children. The priest knows about the Order and the Blessed Rings, so if the characters can be identified as guardian priests, Milon will recognise them as such and demand their aid.

If Milon recognises the characters as guardian priests, read the following:

Brothers in Christ! I know that ring you bear and what it signifies. I beg you, help me! There is evil in this city that must be destroyed!

If they overhear his sermon, read:

Hark, all ye people! The devil walks amongst you! I have seen him leer from beneath his mask of flesh! Two children have already been taken by his demons – how long will you wait before you can stand no more? Will you wait until the hosts of Hell are at your very door? Because that time is now!

Who has the courage to stand against evil? The Lord is with us and he shall grant us victory if we are brave enough to take up arms against the devil!

Either way, Milon's plea is the same: Two children vanished from the market district of Provins and he believes that he knows who is responsible. There is a sorcerer who lives in Provins, a necromancer who traffics with the devil. His name is Hernaudin and he dwells in the Crow Tower.

Milon has no proof of Hernaudin's guilt – which is why he needs the guardian priests. They can break into the Crow Tower and rescue the children if, by some miracle, they are still alive. If the characters ask why he suspects Hernaudin of the kidnapping, Milon claims that God guided him to this conclusion – he was watching a mummer's mystery play of the Creation and realised that the children were as innocent as Adam and Eve before the Fall and that the Necromancer was the serpent who led them astray.

Milon is a fanatic; play him as such. The characters are either with him, in which case he sees them as angelic warriors in the service of the Most High, or against him, in which case they have surely succumbed to the blandishments of Satan and must be destroyed. Try to keep the players on his side for as long as possible, if you can.

If the characters agree to help Milon, then they can either continue to investigate the mystery covertly (in which case, see *the Necromancer of Provins*) or else attempt to break into the tower as Milon suggests (covered in *the Crow Tower*).

The Necromancer of Provins

The shadow of the Crow Tower falls across Provins. Everyone in the city has strange tales about the man who dwells in that eerie place but no two tales agree. The truth about the Necromancer is something the characters will have to find for themselves.

Word on the Streets

Gathering rumours about the missing children or the necromancer requires an Influence or Streetwise roll. Insight can be used to augment tests for rumours about the children; Lore (Occult) can be used to augment tests related to the necromancer.

Rumours about the missing children:

- Their names are Jak and Ava; both come from poor families. They are seven years and nine years old, respectively.

- No-one has seen the children in several days; a search of the poor quarter has shown no sign of them.
- Children go missing in Provins every few years around this time; some say there are witches who sacrifice the children to the devil, or that the city is built on a Fairy Hill and they take their tribute in the form of children.
- Others guess that the children were taken by some merchant or thief to be sold as slaves.
- The last place the children were seen was the market but the time is in doubt. Their parents last saw the children near the Crow Tower and they were warned not to go too close to that ill-omened place. Others claim to have seen the children much later that day in the market.

A critical success gets the characters a vital clue:

- The children were seen talking to the band of mummers that was in town earlier.

The guardian priests can track down the parents of the children easily enough; both families are part of Father Milon's congregation. Neither family has any more useful information, although Ava's mother Ulisa claims that her daughter was very sensible and clever and would never run away willingly.

Rumours about the Necromancer:

- Hernaudin sold his soul to the devil; that is where he got his money from.
- He is a white magician, not a black one. He healed his sick wife; some say he raised her from the dead, as Our Lord did for Lazarus.
- He is no sorcerer, he just collects old books.
- They say he dragged the Crow Tower out of Hell and that it was built by the damned. Anyone who says it was built by Othon the Mason and his workers is lying; the wizard just put a spell on the damned to make them *look* like Othon's lads.
- I do not know about Hernaudin but his wife Jehanne has a good soul. She gives his money to the poor as fast as Hernaudin can earn it.
- His wife Jehanne is as damned as her husband but she is trying to buy her way into Heaven.
- Hernaudin hardly ever leaves his tower but Jehanne is one of Countess Marie's handmaidens.

A critical success gets the characters a clue that should make them pause:

- Countess Marie is a friend of Hernaudin; he is her astrologer.

Lady Jehanne

If the characters want to speak to Hernaudin's wife Jehanne outside of the Crow Tower, then the place to go is the count's palace. Jehanne is one of the handmaidens to Count Henry II's mother, Marie of France. Getting into the count's palace requires a Difficult (-20%) Courtesy roll and a good reason for visiting the court, or favours from a Blessed Ring. Alternatively, if any of the characters has a good Sing, Dance or Play Instrument score, they may be able to get in as an entertainer. If all else fails, they can wait outside the court for a day, waiting for Jehanne to emerge.

Jehanne is an unnatural pale young woman of great beauty and serenity. She never raises her voice or shows any strong emotion; a conversation with her is like speaking to a china doll. She does smile, a little sadly but very sweetly and does not seem unhappy or trapped, merely detached and enigmatic.

The Children: If the characters ask about the missing children, she claims to know nothing of the case, but assures the characters that her prayers are with the families who have lost such treasures. She takes off her earrings, each one studded with a valuable emerald and presses them on the characters, asking that they give the jewels to the unfortunate mothers. If the players ask, she admits that she has no children herself; a successful Insight test at this point notes that this is obviously a painful topic for her – she is barren due to the magic Hernaudin used to save her life.

The Dowager Countess of Champagne

Marie of France is one of the most influential women in France, a patron of the arts and a political force in her own right. She is a princess of France; she was the eldest daughter of King Louis and King Philip Augustus is her younger half-brother. She was regent of Champagne for many years until her son came of age; she will take over as regent again when he leaves on Crusade.

She took Jehanne as one of her handmaidens partly because of Jehanne's lively wit and partly because Marie sometimes employs Hernaudin as an astrologer. This relationship between the countess and the sorcerer is kept secret but many in town know that the countess has consulted Hernaudin's wisdom in the past. He even drew up a birth chart for her son Henry.

Hernaudin: Jehanne is initially evasive about her husband's occupation and interests - he has warned her about the dangers of speaking openly about sorcery. She does admit that Hernaudin is a wise and learned man with certain esoteric interests but that he harms no-one and is a devout Christian.

She and Hernaudin met six years ago, when she was dying of a fever. All the doctors and priests pronounced her beyond saving and she was given the last rites. Then, her father brought in the scholar Hernaudin and by his arts he brought her back from the brink of death. They were married a year later.

Hernaudin's experiments do require him to stay in the Crow Tower for long periods and he dislikes visitors. If the characters wish to speak to him, she will convey their request but they could be waiting several days... unless they have truly pressing business, in which case would they please tell her what it is so she can inform her husband?

Visiting The Crow Tower

If the characters arrive at the Crow Tower and just knock on the door, they will be ignored. If they raise a fuss, then Hernaudin's servant Ygren emerges from the tower and recites in a monotone that Hernaudin does not want to be disturbed by any salesmen, preachers, beggars, apprentices, fortune-seekers or thieves. He then immediately spins on his heel and marches back into the tower. If the characters persist, then he empties a chamber-pot on them from a high window.

The characters can gain entrance to the Crow Tower if they prove knowledgeable about the occult and promise to leave any and all weapons with Ygren - Hernaudin is paranoid about assassins. He will allow no more than two monks into the tower at any time.

They can also get in if Jehanne vouches for them.

Hernaudin The Necromancer

The popular conception of a necromancer is a skeletal figure, dressed all in black, with a skull-cap and a gnarled staff. Hernaudin fails on every single one of these, although there may be a skull cap somewhere in the back. He is fat, merry-faced and dresses in rich colours and furs as befits a wealthy man. He has no staff but there is a well-used mace hanging on the wall behind him. He is quick to

So, We Kidnap The Wife!

Aggressive players may leap to the idea of kidnapping Jehanne and holding her to ransom until Hernauding gives back the missing children. This plan is extremely unwise – not only does this infuriate the necromancer, prompting him to send his ghoulish allies after the characters but it also angers Marie of France, bringing the wrath of all Champagne down on them.

They could grab Jehanne and march her to the gates of the Crow Tower with a knife to her throat, which means they are ‘only’ facing down a hill full of ghouls and an angry necromancer, instead of a hill full of ghouls, an angry necromancer and every guard and knight in France...

laugh and appreciates both dry wit and lewd jokes. His chosen profession is a sinister, perilous and potentially sinful one but Hernaudin sees no reason why that should mean he has to be serious and dour all the time.

He is highly intelligent and forward-thinking, a Renaissance man born centuries early. He considers himself to be a good man, and even a deist, but he secretly holds free-thinking beliefs that the church would find utterly heretical; he denies the divinity of Jesus and questions the common conception of God. He has had no dealings with the Order, in fact, the Order did investigate him three years ago but Marie of France shielded him from repercussions without Hernaudin ever being aware that he was in grave danger but has heard rumours that the church suppresses the open use of magic. He believes that his sorcery is morally sound, or at least harmless.

If the characters raise the question of the stolen children, he frowns and admits that he may know who is responsible – and promises that he will aid the characters in trying to recover the innocents!

The Ghouls of Provins: For some years, now, Hernaudin has been in contact with a tribe of ghouls who live in the tunnels under Provins. These creatures fear and hate the surface folk, and yes, they do eat the dead but they are intelligent and capable of rational thought and communication. Hernaudin believes the ghouls hold great wisdom in their own strange way and that a connection can be forged between the surface and the underworld through trust and kindness.

The ghouls trust him now and almost consider him a friend. However... he does know that some ghouls in the tribe are violent and dangerous. The ghouls do sometimes prey on the surface for fresh meat. Normally, they dare only take lambs or other livestock, or maybe waylay a lone traveller but on certain religious occasions, they do hunger for rarer meat. The ghouls have kidnapped children in the past and while he tried to dissuade them from doing so, they may have done it again. It is possible, if they were taken by the ghouls, that the children are still alive.

He will descend into the tunnels in search of the children, if the characters accompany him.

The Ghouls of Paris and The Ghoul Idol: If the characters played through Chapter 4, *On The Road*, they may have already battled ghouls or be carrying the mysterious ghoulish idol. Hernaudin is troubled if they mention they have spilled ghoulish blood recently – the creatures have supernaturally sharp senses and may be able to scent the smell of dead ghouls on the PCs. He may be able to talk

Ygren the Minion

Ygren is Hernaudin's servant, major-domo and bodyguard. He is neither a seven-foot tall lurching cadaver nor an ugly hunchback; he is a former mercenary and bandit who attempted to murder Hernaudin several years ago. The necromancer defeated Ygren with magic but then spared his life, winning the mercenary's undying loyalty. Ygren is a relentlessly practical man and now oversees most of Hernaudin's business dealings in addition to running the household. If anything, he is more protective of the sorcerer than Hernaudin himself is.

the beasts down but he emphasises that the characters should be as non-threatening as possible and should ideally leave their weapons behind.

If they have the ghoulish idol and show it to Hernaudin, then he is extremely impressed. The idol is the vessel for the spirit Kairneros, a lord of the dead. The ghouls consider him to be a 'dead saint' of their bizarre church. Hernaudin peers closely at whichever character was carrying the idol, and mutters about the 'ghoul taint taking a while to show' or 'hope you wore gloves all the time'. He refuses to touch the idol himself but urges the characters to bring it with them as an offering.

Into the Underworld: If the characters are agreeable to Hernaudin's plan, then he leads them into the courtyard, where Ygren lowers them down into the well, one-by-one... skip onto *Into The Underworld*, below.

The Crow Tower

The Crow Tower is an ugly black building, five stories tall. The lower two stories are built of stone; the upper levels are wood. Unlike the rest of the buildings near the market, the tower stands alone, detached from its neighbouring structures. Five years ago, a slaughterhouse stood here; Hernaudin bought it and had it torn down to build his home.

The tower's nickname comes from the huge numbers of fat black crows that roost on the roof. Anyone trying to sneak into the tower must make a Hard (-40%) Stealth test or otherwise distract the birds, or their alarmed croaking will alert Ygren.

A wall runs around the outside of the tower, enclosing a small courtyard. There are two gates in the wall; one large gate opening onto the street, wide enough for two horses to pass abreast, and a small side door that opens into an alleyway. Both are kept locked at all times (Difficult (-20%) to pick). The wall is topped with jagged flints; a character who climbs the wall (Difficult (20%) Athletic Test) without checking first suffers 1D3 damage to his hand when he reaches the top and another 1D3 damage to a leg or abdomen if he does climb over the top.

The Courtyard

The small courtyard is used for storage of Hernaudin's trade goods. There are a pair of guard dogs, vicious brutes that bark loudly and attack anyone who does not immediately retreat. The guard dogs will pointedly *not* attack a character who is carrying the ghoulish idol - Hernaudin has trained the beasts not to attack ghouls.

Concealed behind crates and barrels, there are two coffins, still partially caked in grave dirt. These coffins were recently stolen from a Provins cemetery by the sorcerer, for use in his necromantic experiments.

Some of the flagstones are enchanted with Phantom (Vision) spells, triggered when an intruder steps on them. Those who step unwisely must make Persistence tests opposed by Hernaudin's Gri-moire skill or become momentarily convinced that the Crow Tower is falling on them.

The Well

A low stone well stands in the middle of the yard. At the bottom of the well, the characters can see no water, just a muddy chamber that seems to be the entrance to a tunnel. There is a sturdy rope ladder rolled up next to the well and there are two metal rings for attaching the ladder set into the stones nearby.

The Lower Tower

The main door to the tower is bound in brass and is sturdy enough to withstand a battering ram. A more agile character can try climbing up to one of the upper windows and squeezing in that way. The lower levels of the tower contain the family's living quarters, Ygren's room, a study and the kitchen and dining rooms. For the most part, it looks like the house of any other wealthy merchant but there are a few unusual things on the lower levels:

- There is one bedroom, obviously belonging to a woman, that contains a curious apparatus of brass and clay that comprises several jars and a hand-operated pump. This device has several flexible hoses made of waxed cloth that end in sharp needles. A Medicine or Lore (Occult) roll suggests that this device is designed to pump some ghastly liquid into a sleeping body.
- There is a trapdoor in the entrance hallway, leading underground. This trapdoor leads to an underground chamber with thick stone walls. Hernaudin keeps dangerous alchemical supplies and other perilous substances down here. Floating in two jars here are a pair of homunculi – perfectly formed humans no more than three inches tall, with pale blue skin. One is male; the other female. Hernaudin grew them as an experiment in making children through magic.
- A warrior's helmet sits on one table. This helmet has a full-face mask, so nothing of the wearer can be seen when it is worn. A character who passes a Perception test notices that there is a decapitated living head inside the helmet – this is the head of a knight who offended Hernaudin, long ago. The sorcerer uses him as a paperweight. The head cannot speak, but can mouth words and look pleadingly with its eyes. If asked, Hernaudin assures the characters that it is simply a wax model of a head, not a living thing at all.
- The spiral stairs to the upper levels of the tower are blocked by a heavy door. It is extremely difficult (~40%) to force this door using Brawn, as the staircase twists in just such a way to block an intruder from applying his full force against it.
- Light-fingered characters can loot money and goods to the value of 1,000 silver pennies here.

Ygren spends most of his time here during the day. At night, Jehanne may also be present.

The Upper Tower

All the windows of the upper tower are heavily barred, so it is impossible to climb through them. Characters could use Blasting Powder or Aqua Fortis to weaken the bars enough to pull them away. The only other way into the upper tower is via the staircase from the lower tower.

The upper tower contains Hernaudin's library and study. A sturdy chest holds the sorcerer's collection of books and a stacked pile of six coffins contains his experimental subjects – or trade goods, depending on how his experiments work out. Hernaudin has no interest in raising an army of the undead; he makes zombies for practise, then marches them down to the ghouls as tribute. The

PROVINS WARREN ENCOUNTER TABLE

Roll	Encounter
1	Tunnel Entrance: The tunnel here contains an exit to the surface via (roll 1d6): 1-2: a cave mouth; 3: a basement; 4: a loose flagstone; 5: a grave; 6: it is blocked with fallen stones, roll again.
2	Empty tunnel: Nothing here except graffiti and old dust.
3	Lone ghoul: A lone ghoul, sneaking through the upper tunnels. If Hernaudin is with the characters, the ghoul cowers and lets them pass. Otherwise, it flees or attacks depending on the demeanour of the PCs.
4-5	Catacomb: This tunnel is lined with old coffins, long since plundered by the ghouls. Some are used by smugglers as convenient stashes for goods.
6-7	Ghoul Tunnel: These tunnels were clearly not made by human hands; the walls glow a putrescent green and seem to have been not so much carved as moulded, as if the earth was turned to green clay.
8	Ghoul Chapel: The characters find the ghoul chapel.
9+	Ghoul Lair: The characters enter the main ghoul settlement.

corpses he steals from local cemeteries. The corpses in these coffins are zombies and will rise up to devour intruders or to defend Hernaudin.

Searching this room turns up various occult paraphernalia and weird curios, including a *Wand of the Magus* (see *Games Masters Story Guide* page 112. There is no sign of Hernaudin's grimoire after a casual search - it is hidden behind a loose stone in the wall. Finding it requires a Hard (-40%) Perception test.

Hernaudin spends most of the day here, reading and occasionally experimenting with a corpse.

If The Alarm Is Raised

If the characters fail to be stealthy, then they have to deal with the tower's defenders. Ygren will immediately head to defend Jehanne, if she is home, or else head up to the upper tower and Hernaudin. The sorcerer orders the zombies to attack any intruders, casts defensive spells on himself and then goes to deal with the intruders himself.

The Missing Children

There are certainly plenty of *suspicious* items in the Crow Tower but there is nothing to tie Hernaudin directly to the crime. If the characters wish, they can confront Hernaudin and accuse him of kidnapping the children. This does not go down well but Hernaudin will (at least initially) try to disable the intruders instead of killing them outright. Anyone who threatens Jehanne, though, will be summarily killed by the sorcerer.

If the characters return to Father Milon with no proof that the sorcerer is holding the children, then the priest accuses the guardian priests of being in league with Hernaudin. Unless stopped, the priest assembles a mob, as described in *Fire and Brimstone*.

Into The Underworld

The tunnels of Provins are old indeed. There are graffiti-marked catacombs and secret passages used by smugglers, old Roman and still older Gallic graves, long-abandoned sewers or fortifications and beneath them all the secret realm of the ghouls. The characters are not alone down here; in several places, they see signs that someone or something else has recently passed

through – mud on the floor, a fresh scratch on the stone, echoing footsteps in the distance – but they will never encounter another soul until they reach the lower levels.

If the characters are travelling with Hernaudin, then the sorcerer leads them through the underground labyrinth straight to the main ghoulish settlements, passing the ghoulish chapel en route to the ghoulish lair. Otherwise, as the characters make their way through the warrens, repeatedly roll 1D6 on the Provins Warren Encounter Table, adding +1 to a cumulative modifier per previous roll if the characters are going down, or subtracting -1 from the modifier if the characters are going up.

If the characters are being pursued by the ghouls on the way back, then any result of 6 or more means the characters are attacked by 1D4+1 ghouls.

The Ghoulish Chapel

This chapel was originally built on the surface and the stones show signs of being weathered by wind and rain. The ghouls stole it, block-by-block and rebuilt it in the lightless caves below. The chapel has been rededicated to the ghouls' own bizarre version of Christianity, where Lazarus taught Christ to consume human flesh. Paintings on the wall depict scenes from the ghoulish bible, such as the Feast at Cana (where the better meat was served last), the miracle of the Resurrection (Christ rose to devour those who discovered the empty tomb) and the Pentecost (where the apostles consumed living flesh for the first time). There are meat-hooks in the upper reaches of the chapel, where sacrifices are stored.

Lurking in the rafters of the church is the Ghoulish Priest. This elder ghoulish is eager to find sacrifices for the religious ceremony – the Ghoulish King forbade the tribe from preying on humans on the surface but intruders are fair game. The priest will attack only if Hernaudin is not with the characters. Its attack method is to hide in the rafters, then it reaches down and grabs a straggler. It carries the victim off into the darkness, knocks him out, then returns for the next sacrifice.

The Ghoulish Lair

Eventually, the characters arrive in the heart of the ghoulish lair – a huge cavern with dozens of smaller tunnels running off it in every direction. This cave is located beneath an old graveyard; coffins and cloth-wrapped corpses poke from the earth of the ceiling. The ghouls pull coffins out of the roof of their home when hungry. There are more than 200 ghouls in this colony, making it one of the larger tribes in France. The place stinks like an abattoir and there are suspicious bloodstains everywhere. There are no light sources save whatever the characters bring with them, so the characters may need to feel their way across the cavern.

If the characters are in Hernaudin's company, then the sorcerer casts a light spell, illuminating a circle around the party. Dozens of ghouls slink out of the tunnels, gathering in the gloom and baying for blood. Some of the braver ghouls occasionally dart towards the characters but retreats when Hernaudin thrusts his staff at them or if the characters brandish weapons.

If the characters are *not* in Hernaudin's company, then they have to either sneak through the cave (a Hard (-40%) Stealth test) or else convince the ghouls not to tear them limb from limb through a really impressive feat of diplomacy or else by offering them the ghoulish idol from Paris.

Searching the Cave: There are piles of gnawed bones everywhere, some fresher than others. If the characters search through the more recent remains, they find no sign of the stolen children.

The Ghoulish King: On the far side of the ghoulish cavern is the lair of the Ghoulish King, another elder ghoulish of great size. The Ghoulish King sits on a throne of skulls with several 'comely' female ghouls at his hooved feet. Drapes of leather made from human flesh – a sign of tremendous wealth and pres-



Deus Ex Sorcerer

If your unwise guardian priests have wandered into the ghoul tunnels without Hernaudin or any plan of escape, then they may be in trouble. Rather than having them *all* meet a grisly (if not gristly) end, you can have Hernaudin find them just as they are about to be eaten.

tige in the society of the underworld – hang from the walls and the King wears a crown of tarnished silver and is decked in grave goods and offerings.

Ghoul Diplomacy

Negotiation with the ghouls works very differently depending on whether the characters are alone or with the sorcerer.

In the company of the Sorcerer: If the characters are with Hernaudin, then they can let the sorcerer do the talking. He addresses the ghouls in Latin. As Hernaudin talks, other ghouls crawl into the king's lair, crowding around to see the strange visitors.

'Mighty king, carrion lord, I bear greetings from the surface world. I bring a gift of meat.' Paranoid characters may assume that Hernaudin means them but the sorcerer produces a bloody bag from his robes and places it in the outstretched hands of one of the ghoul maidens. *'Mighty king, I must ask you if you or any of your kin have tasted the flesh of living men since the solstice? Two children were taken from Provens and I know that the Feast of St. Lazarus is coming soon.'*

The Ghoul King growls and replies *'No, sorcerer, we have not eaten the flesh of living men in months. The hunger gnaws at me and my cubs have never known the sweet taste of human meat but we have held true to our oath. We did not take any children to eat.'*

Hernaudin turns to the characters and shrugs, as if to say *'we must take his word'* but then another large ghoul steps forward. *'You forbid us human flesh and then you tell us that someone else is taking the sweet-meats? If man preys on man, then why should we deny ourselves? Why hold true to our oath, if they will be eaten anyway?'* The other ghouls mutter and growl support for this argument.

Unless the characters act immediately to defend Hernaudin or argue down the angry young ghoul, then the tribe turns on the characters. The ghouls have been denying themselves for months, but now the characters have trailed the taste of fresh meat across the cave.

On Their Own: If the characters are not in Hernaudin's company, then they need to negotiate with the Ghoul King themselves. The King is intrigued by the sheer bravado of the intruders, so he will give them an audience but they need to respect his authority and make suitable offerings and obsequies to keep it amused and beneficent. The same sequence of events will occur if the characters are able to negotiate with the king – as soon as the ghouls learn that someone else is eating humans (or at least kidnapping humans, and the ghouls cannot conceive of any reason why someone would kidnap a child other than dinner), the king's oath to Hernaudin is challenged.

Return to the Ghoul Chapel

If the characters give the ghoule idol as a gift to the King, then there is much rejoicing among the ghouls. They show their appreciation by whooping, laughing and throwing scraps of carrion meat on the characters. The Ghoul King leads his tribe in a grotesque procession through the tunnels back to the chapel, where the idol is placed with great ceremony on the altar.

The Ghoul Priest clammers down from its perch and offers to perform a secret ghoul rite for one of the characters. The ghouls can brew up a potion of human blood and corpse-fat than allows the imbiber to recall the lives of his ancestors in a trace. The priest can then interpret the babblings of the entranced character.

If the characters accept this offer, then the priest prepares the potion for the unlucky volunteer. Making the potion inflicts two points of damage on the character's arm, as blood must be drawn. The character must also make an Easy (+20%) Resilience test to keep the foul brew down. If successful, the character has a glimpse of his ancestor's lives – this gives the character two free Improvement Rolls and the GM can also use this incident to drop in plot twists tailored to the character (*'what, my great-grandfather was a king?'*).

If you intend to run *The Tomb of Solomon* after this adventure, then the Ghoul Priest solemnly listens to the character's glossolalian ramblings and then speaks in a broken mix of Greek and Latin. *'Your path will take you to the Tomb of Father-of-Corpses, wise King Solomon. It is not a good place for ghouls to go, for he buried things in the earth that are more dangerous than our kind. There are old ghouls in the ruins of Tadmor, which ye call Palmyra. Chief of these ghouls is al-Dabu, the Great Hyena. Behold! I make the mark of the ghoul upon this one and he shall look upon al-Dabu and not be harmed.'* Unless stopped, the ghoul priest scrapes a symbol into the forehead of the insensate monk with a filthy fingernail. This wound will never heal fully, leaving an ugly black scar for life but the symbol may be useful in a later adventure.

Return to the Surface

If the characters ended their time with the ghouls peacefully, then the Ghoul King sends a pack of his servants to accompany them back to the surface – just in case some of the more rebellious younger ghouls decide to take a snack. The ghouls lope and gibber through the tunnels ahead of the characters and the return to the surface seems to take much less time than the descent did.

If the characters are fleeing the ghoul pack, then they return to the surface with the monsters baying at their heels. The ghouls stop short of pursuing the characters onto the surface but they will chase them to the very bottom of Hernaudin's dry well.

fire and Brimstone

While the characters were absent, Father Milon decided to take matters into his own hands. He has assembled a mob of over 100 people, mostly drawn from the poor of Provins but also including some men-at-arms and mercenaries. He preached to them, telling them of the necromancer's evil and how he stole away young Ava and Jak to sacrifice them to the devil. All of Champagne is already in a combative mood, inspired by the Count's impending crusade, so it was easy for the old priest to whip the crowd into a murderous fury.

A mob more than 100 strong, carrying burning torches and pitchforks and clubs and swords and whatever they can lay their hands on, comes marching across the market square just as the characters emerge from the underworld.

Any character who has seen the madness caused by the Joyous One can make an Insight roll to realise that Father Milon has been driven mad by the spirit.

On arriving at the Crow Tower, Milon demands that Hernaudin hand over the missing children. The characters have a chance now to speak but they must choose their words carefully. Milon is insane and will assume that anything said in Hernaudin's defence means that the necromancer has

The Mummer's Play: The Creation

The night after leaving Provins, the characters all share the same dream. This dream is the first tendrill of psychic contact from the Joyous One as it tries to worm its way into the minds of its pursuers. Any character protected by Spirit Resistance or who carries a holy relic such as a Fragment of the True Cross does not share the dream.

In the dream, the characters are in a crowd in the market square of Provins. A band of travelling mummers are putting on a biblical mystery play, depicting the events of the Book of Genesis. The leader of the band is a thin man who wears a black mask - if the characters have seen Jacques Taillebois before, they recognise the eyes of the possessed leper. The narrator speaks in a raspy voice of how Mankind once dwelt in a garden of joy but was exiled from this land of bountiful pleasures by a jealous and cruel God.

In the dream, Adam and Eve are played by two children - the kidnapped children from Provins. At the end of the dream, the narrator sweeps them up in his black cloak as if they never existed.

bewitched the guardian priests. The only way to defuse the situation is to say that the children are already dead and to blame the deaths on someone else, exonerating the necromancer and to phrase it in such a way that leaves no doubt that the characters are not Hernaudin's servants.

The Crow Tower Burns

If the characters do not intervene, then Milon's mob breaks down the gates and charges towards the Crow Tower. The tower's defences cause some confusion, but enough of the mob make it through to start hammering at the door of the tower itself. The discovery of the stolen coffins in the courtyard adds to their fury.

If Hernaudin is not with the characters, then the necromancer activates his zombies and goes downstairs with Ygren to defend his home. He will use his sorcery on the mob but even his power is limited.

Other options for the fight include:

- The mob sets fire to the tower's upper levels, trapping Lady Jehanne in her rooms. She burns to death.
- The ghouls scent blood and swarm out of the well, attacking the mob.
- Hernaudin blasts Father Milon with a spell, killing the old priest instantly. The sorcerer is then overwhelmed and butchered by the mob.
- Optionally, the whole courtyard could collapse under the weight of the mob and the collapsing tower.

This encounter should spiral almost inevitably towards catastrophe unless the players are very clever in coming up with a solution. The most likely outcome is that dozens of people die and the characters are forced to flee Provins immediately to avoid being implicated in the disaster. If you can, make the players hate the Joyous One for sowing such discord in the town and causing so much suffering.

Fr. Milon

The aged priest has been given a new lease of life by his madness – his faith is renewed and his spirit inflamed by the desire to save the children. Unfortunately, his paranoia has put him on the wrong course and his righteous actions will soon have terrible consequences.

		1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP	<i>Combat Actions</i>	2
STR	8	1-3	Right Leg	-/4	<i>Damage Modifier</i>	-1d2
CON	6	4-6	Left Leg	-/4	<i>Magic Points</i>	13
SIZ	12	7-9	Abdomen	-/5	<i>Movement</i>	8m
INT	13	10-12	Chest	-/6	<i>Strike Rank</i>	+9
POW	13	13-15	Right Arm	-/3		
DEX	5	16-18	Left Arm	-/3		
CHA	9	19-20	Head	-/4		

Armour: None

Equipment: None

Notable Skills: Influence 60%, Lore (Christian Theology) 65%, Lore (Occult) 30%, Streetwise 40%

WEAPONS

<i>Type</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Reach</i>	<i>Weapon Skill</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>AP/HP</i>
Dagger	S	S	30%	1D4+1	6/8

Jehanne

The nature of Jehanne should be left as a mystery for the players. Did Hernaudin merely heal her when she was on the brink of death – or did he bring her back as one of the undead?

		1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP	<i>Combat Actions</i>	3
STR	9	1-3	Right Leg	-/5	<i>Damage Modifier</i>	-1d2
CON	14	4-6	Left Leg	-/5	<i>Magic Points</i>	10
SIZ	7	7-9	Abdomen	-/6	<i>Movement</i>	8m
INT	15	10-12	Chest	-/7	<i>Strike Rank</i>	+13
POW	10	13-15	Right Arm	-/4		
DEX	11	16-18	Left Arm	-/4		
CHA	15	19-20	Head	-/5		

Armour: None

Equipment: None

Heroic Abilities: Tireless

Notable Skills: Craft (needlework) 50%, Courtesy 60%, Dance 55%, Influence 65%

Ygren

A former mercenary, Ygren is not as hard or fit as he once was, having traded the life of a brigand for that of a merchant. He still remembers how to hold a sword, though and his chainmail still fits over his growing belly.

		1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP	<i>Combat Actions</i>	2
STR	15	1-3	Right Leg	2/7	<i>Damage Modifier</i>	+1d2
CON	16	4-6	Left Leg	2/7	<i>Magic Points</i>	8
SIZ	15	7-9	Abdomen	5/8	<i>Movement</i>	8m
INT	12	10-12	Chest	5/9	<i>Strike Rank</i>	+12 (+6 in armour)
POW	8	13-15	Right Arm	5/6		
DEX	9	16-18	Left Arm	5/6		
CHA	10	19-20	Head	2/7		

Armour: Leather and Chain

Equipment: Longsword, Dagger, Shield

Notable Skills: Commerce 40%, Lore (tactics) 40%, Perception 60%, Persistence 30%, Resilience 55%, Stealth 50%, Survival 60%



WEAPONS

Type	Size	Reach	Weapon Skill	Damage	AP/HP
Sword and Shield	M	L	72%	1d8	6/12
Shield	L	S	72%	1d4	6/12

Elder Ghouls

Elder Ghouls are older specimens of their species. After many centuries of unnatural life, the ghoul grows stronger and faster. Many elder ghouls learn the rudiments of sorcery and other develop the power to consume knowledge by eating the brains of the dead.

	Dice	Avg	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP	Combat Actions	3
STR	3D6+12	24	1-3	Right Leg	3/8	Damage Modifier	+1D8
CON	2D6+12	19	4-6	Left Leg	3/8	Magic Points	14
SIZ	2D6+12	19	7-9	Abdomen	3/9	Movement	10m
INT	3D6+3	14	10-12	Chest	3/10	Strike Rank	+16
POW	3D6+3	14	13-15	Right Arm	3/7		
DEX	3D6+6	18	16-18	Left Arm	3/7		
CHA	2D6+3	11	19-20	Head	3/8		

Armour: Rugose Hide, 3 Armour Points

Traits: Formidable Natural Weapons, Night Sight

Notable Skills: Athletics 70%, Brawn 60%, Influence 60%, Perception 70%, Persistence 80%, Resilience 120%, Stealth 40%, Track 80%



WEAPONS

Type	Size	Reach	Weapon Skill	Damage	AP/HP
Bite	S	T	80%	1D10+1D8	As for Head
Claw	S	S	140%	1D8+1D8	As for Leg

Hernaudin The Necromancer

The former monk is now an adept sorcerer and has acquired several grimoires which he has combined into *The Path of the Dead*. He intends to one day transcend death itself but he is in no hurry to leave this life – the food is too good.

		1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP	Combat Actions	3
STR	10	1-3	Right Leg	-/5	Damage Modifier	+0
CON	11	4-6	Left Leg	-/5	Magic Points	14
SIZ	14	7-9	Abdomen	-/6	Movement	8m
INT	16	10-12	Chest	-/7	Strike Rank	+13
POW	14	13-15	Right Arm	-/4		
DEX	9	16-18	Left Arm	-/4		
CHA	12	19-20	Head	-/5		

Armour: None

Equipment: Wand of the Magus

Spells: Animate (Dead Flesh), Damage Resistance, Glow, Neutralise Magic, Palsy, Phantom (Sense), Tap (CON), Treat Wounds, Undead Slave

Notable Skills: Influence 40%, Grimoire (*Path of the Dead*) 75%, Lore (Occult) 80%, Manipulation 55%, Perception 50%, Persistence 75%, Resilience 44%



WEAPONS

Type	Size	Reach	Weapon Skill	Damage	AP/HP
Staff	M	L	55%	1D8	4/8

Guard Dogs

These are large mastiffs or other dangerous breeds, suitable for use as hunting or guard dogs.

	Dice	Avg	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP	Combat Actions	2
STR	3D6	11	1-3	Right Leg	1/5	Damage Modifier	+0
CON	3D6	11	4-6	Left Leg	1/5	Magic Points	11
SIZ	2D6+3	10	7-9	Abdomen	1/6	Movement	8m
INT	5	5	10-12	Chest	1/7	Strike Rank	+11
POW	3D6	11	13-15	Right Arm	1/4		
DEX	3D6	11	16-18	Left Arm	1/4		
CHA	—	—	19-20	Head	1/5		

Armour: Fur and Hide, 1 Point

Traits: Night Sight

Notable Skills: Athletics 50%, Brawn 40%, Evade 30%, Perception 65%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 40%, Stealth 30%, Survival 20%, Track 50%



WEAPONS

Type	Size	Reach	Weapon Skill	Damage	AP/HP
Bite	M	T	50%	1D8	As for Head
Claw	M	M	20%	1D3	As for Leg

Verse 5.3

DEATH OF A HERMIT



After leaving Provins, the characters chase after the mummers' caravan for a long week. No matter how quick they march or how hard they push their horses, they always seem to be a day or two behind the mummers.

Finally, in the city of Orleans, there is a glimmer of hope.

Orleans

The town of Orleans stands on the Loire, the great trading river of France. The town grew up around a bridge and tolls from those crossing the river make up a significant part of the town's income. This also means that the bridge-keepers see almost everyone that passes through the town and so are excellent sources of gossip.

In exchange for a few coins, one cocky young guard relates that he saw a band of mummers cross the river just yesterday. They said they were planning on travelling to the coast and asked where the best town to hire a ship for passage would be. The guards told them to follow the river to Saint-Nazaire at the mouth of the Loire. Before the mummers could set off, though, they were approached by a monk from the monastery of Saint-Mesmin de Micy, an old monastery located a short distance outside of Orleans. Apparently, the abbot desired entertainment and wished to hire the mummers.

The last time the guard saw the mummers, they were on the road to Micy.

The Monastery of Saint-Mesmin de Micy

Seven hundred years ago, King Clovis of the Franks gave lands to a monk named Euspicius to found a monastery on the banks of the Loire, as well as generous rights of fishing and the right to extract tolls from boats on the river. The monastery prospered greatly, founding many daughter priories and other abbeys, and the bones of a dozen saints lie within the marshy graveyard.

Today, Saint-Mesmin is a large and well-established Benedictine monastery, as large as Mont-Saint-Michel. It is wealthy and with wealth has come corruption and indolence. Saint-Mesmin is a particularly egregious example of the sort of venal, self-serving monks who ignore the rules of St. Benedict and are concerned solely with their own pleasures.

The Monastery

Saint-Mesmin is built on marshland near the confluence of the Loire and the smaller river Loiret. Although the monks have drained much of the land, the monastery's foundations are still comparatively weak, so they were compelled to build *out* rather than up. As such, Saint-Mesmin sprawls over a wide area. The spire of the chapel of Saint-Mesmin can be seen from a distance, rising up over the monastery's cloister and four dormitories. Behind the chapel stands the low bulk of the round library tower, which resembles a sullen dwarf compared to the elegant height of the new spire.

Closer to the river can be found the monastery's two guest-houses - one large and draughty, the other smaller and newer for important guests, the hospital, the granary and the complex of warehouses and docks that provide much of the monastery's income. In previous years, the monks fished the river themselves but today they sell the right to fish to peasants and take a third of their catch too.

Abbot Gerin (Envy)

The abbot is the second son of the bishop of Orleans and was promoted to his current high rank by the intercession of his 'heavenly father'. No-one in the monastery would dare speak openly

of the abbot's family connections but it is an open secret. Gerin is 24 and as such is exceedingly young to hold such a high post. Despite this honour, he is deeply dissatisfied with his lot in life; as a child, he was fostered by the Duke of Orleans and would much prefer to be a noble knight than a monk. He envies the sons of the duke and spends what time he can hunting with them in the Forest of Orleans.

His father, the bishop of Orleans, needs the support and wealth of the monastery for his own political ambitions, so it is absolutely vital that Gerin retain his position. The bishop regularly sends letters exhorting his son to behave and several of the monks – most notably the Precentor – are spies in the bishop's employ.

Gerin tries to avoid public appearances and official duties whenever he can; if forced to interact with visitors, then he pretends to be a suitably devout and humble monk while he scrambles to find an excuse to leave.

Almoner Ogier (Sloth)

The role of the almoner is to provide for the poor and the needy. Ogier considers himself poorer and needier than any of the starving peasants who crowd the chapel door on Sundays. If Ogier can complain about anything, he does – it is too cold to do anything in winter, too hot in summer. His duties are too arduous for him to accomplish anything but try to lighten his burden and he complains that you are overstepping your bounds. It is said of Ogier that if he had been an apostle, he would have complained to the risen Christ about being kept waiting for three whole days. Ogier does as little as possible, as loudly as possible. His conspicuous uselessness distracts from the abbot's slightly less conspicuous incompetence.

Cellarer Thomas (Gluttony)

The cellarer is in charge of the abbey's kitchens and cellars, especially the brewery and it is plain to see that Thomas takes special pride in that area of his responsibility. Thomas is grotesquely fat and due to a 'stomach complaint', he maintains that he is unable to drink water, and so must rely on huge quantities of beer and wine to improve his digestion. When sober, he has a keen mind and bemoans the state of the monastery.

Hosteller Julien (Pride)

The role of the hosteller is to care for pilgrims and guests of the monastery. Julien currently holds this position, much to his chagrin. He believed he would be the next abbot but instead the bishop's son was given the title instead. Julien despises Abbot Gerin and is waiting for him to make a public error so great that the bishop cannot shield him. Under his leadership, Julien believes that he would bring the monastery back to greatness.

Infirmarian Michel (Wrath)

The master of the monastery's house of healing is a former warrior, a Norman who lost an eye in battle and was forced to retire. His skills at healing were learned on the battlefield, so his bedside manner is rather... lacking. (*'You've got two legs, get up and walk, you worm!'*) He and Julien are close friends.

Michel's head wound did more than take his eye – he now suffers from tremendous fits of rage, where the desire to destroy and to maim overwhelms him. The monks have learned to recognise the onset of these fits, and try to restrain Michel by giving him a sleeping draught or putting him to bed.

Precentor Urian (Greed)

The precentor is the master of the scriptorium and the keeper of the library; Saint-Mesmin's library is a large and prestigious one, so this is a very important role here. Urian is a spy for the bishop of Orleans; his role is to keep an eye on the bishop's troublesome son and keep Gerin in check. The bishop pays

Urian handsomely for this. Urian is a vain monk; his robes may be made of simple cloth but he wears golden rings and collars of rich fur.

Sacrist Helier (Lust)

Saint-Mesmin's treasury contains a number of important relics, which are in the care of the charismatic young sacristan. Pilgrims come from distant lands to see these relics – in some cases, young, impressionable female pilgrims, who are sometimes willing to pay a special price to see certain holy items that are not normally displayed to visitors. Young Helier has deflowered more than a few pilgrims, although he assures them that sex with a monk is not sinful at all, especially when it is done behind the altar in a locked chapel.

Helier is a close friend of the abbot; the two hunt together regularly and are of a like mind on most topics.

James The Hermit

Saint-Mesmin is also host to an important guest, James the Hermit, a holy man who normally dwells in a barrel tethered to a pole in the middle of the Loire many miles upriver. From his bobbing barrel, James prays for the forgiveness of his sins and – when the water is especially icy and the barrel especially leaky – has visions of the future. Once a year, he makes a pilgrimage to a great cathedral for mass and this year he is visiting Orleans.

Having James as a guest should be a great honour for the monastery but the presence of the holy hermit has been more of an embarrassment than anything else. James' piety and poverty is a constant reminder of the monks' own failings. Ever since he arrived, Gerin and the other important monks of Saint-Mesmin have been wracked with intense feelings of guilt and shame, not to mention anger towards James for inspiring such unwelcome thoughts.

Worse, if James were to attend mass at the cathedral in Orleans, he could report on the state of the monastery to Gerin's father, the Bishop of Orleans – and while the bishop knows exactly what his son is like, he could not keep turning a blind eye if such an important hermit spoke openly about Gerin's failings....

Mysteries of the Abbey

The characters need to solve two interlinked mysteries at Saint-Mesmin. There are seven suspects to these crimes and two potential murderers. Roll on the following tables to determine who was given their heart's desire by the Joyous One and who killed James the Hermit. It is possible for one monk to have committed both crimes.

The Mummers and The Monastery

Last night, the Joyous One and his band of mummers arrived at the monastery, as Abbot Gerin requested. After three days in the company of James the Hermit, Gerin felt that he needed some relaxation and sent out a monk to find some entertainment. The mummers arrived that night and put on another Mystery Play, this time retelling the tale of Abraham and how he was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac as God commanded him too.

In the course of the play, the Joyous One inspired one of the monks to madness by granting him his heart's desire. The grateful lunatic let the Joyous One into the library, to consult one of the monastery's books of forbidden lore, the *Scrolls of Edessa*. While there, they were interrupted by a young scribe, who the spirit murdered. The scribe's body comes to light the following day – see *Crows on the Roof*.

The mad monk is still at large in the abbey and will continue to kill those he perceives as his enemies. He must be stopped.

Roll (1D10)	Monk	Heart's Desire
1-2	Abbot Gerin	Freedom from guilt – he now believes he has inherited James' piety and so is sinless.
3-4	Almoner Ogier	Renewed desire for life – Ogier believes that he will become the abbot once Gerin's failings come to light and that the monastery will become a place of pilgrimage and devotion, the last resting place of St James the Hermit.
5-6	Precentor Urian	Power and wealth beyond measure – Urian intends to use the secret lore from the library book to become the Emperor of all the World.
7-8	Infirmarian Michel	A return to war – Michel believes the spirit healed his wounds and he is now an invincible warrior.
9-10	Cellarer Thomas	The monastery restored – Thomas believes now that the monastery will become a place of pilgrimage and devotion, the last resting place of St James the Hermit.

Roll (1D10)	Monk	Motive for Murder
1-2	Sacrist Helier	Protect the abbot.
3-4	Precentor Urian	Keep the money flowing from the bishop.
5-6	Hosteller Julien	Discredit the abbot.
7-8	Cellarer Thomas	Got drunk and mistook the hermit for the abbot.
9-10	Infirmarian Michel	Julien asked him to do it to discredit the abbot.

The Murder of James The Hermit

During the night, after the mummers departed, one of the monks crept into the cell of James the Hermit and murdered the saintly man by drowning him in the washbasin. There was a watchman in place at the door of the building, so it must have been one of the seven monks who were in James' company that night...

Trail of the Murderer

The characters arrive at Saint-Mesmin in the early evening, at the hour of Vespers. As soon as prayers are completed, they may speak to either Hosteller Julien (if they conceal their status as guardian priests) or to the abbot, if they present their Blessed Rings.

The Guesthouse

If the characters are staying incognito, then they are given rooms in the larger guesthouse by Julien and told they may attend mass that evening and eat in the refectory (or will be given bread and fish, if they are staying incognito *and* pretending to be laity, not monks). There are several other travellers staying in the guesthouse, most notably:

- Paula and her nurse Gamela:** This young woman, the daughter of a merchant from Orleans, recently recovered from a dangerous fever and came to Saint-Mesmin to give thanks. She caught the eye of Sacrist Helier, although getting the impressionable (and, to be truthful, still a little delirious) girl out from under the thumb of her nurse has so far proved impossible for the lusty monk. Paula can tell the characters about Helier's promise to show her certain secret relics in the chapel tonight if they win her trust; in exchange, she begs that the characters help distract her nurse.

We're Monks On A Mission!

The players may want to refuse the abbot's request, arguing that they have a more important task to complete. They are free to do so, of course, but there are consequences. Firstly, leaving the inspired madman running around the monastery will strengthen the Joyous One, as the spirit can draw Magic Points from its worshippers. Secondly, the characters miss out on the clue of the *Scrolls of Edessa* in the library. Thirdly, and most importantly, if the characters fail to solve the mystery, then the inspired madman will murder the Bishop of Orleans. The murder of the bishop is irrelevant to the players' mission to stop the Joyous One but the Order will ask harsh questions of the guardian priests if they allow the bishop to die. Indeed, the Prioress of the Crypts may prepare a place for them...

- **Iaocaul, a vagabond:** This beggar has wandered the roads for many years. He has heard many tales of James the Hermit and hopes that James might miraculously cure his lame leg. He can tell the characters who James the Hermit is, how the Hermit is staying in the smaller guesthouse and how James will soon go to Orleans for mass in the cathedral. For all James-the-Hermit-related trivia, you can find no better source than Iaocaul.
- **Theobald:** This unassuming fellow claims to be a maker of inks from Orleans, here to bargain with Precentor Urian about providing certain raw materials for the monastery's scriptorium. In truth, he is a spy in the employ of the Bishop of Orleans, here to pay Urian his stipend and to receive the Precentor's report.

It is patently obvious to the characters that something strange has happened in the monastery – there are worried faces and whispering monks everywhere and the atmosphere is one of impending doom. Whatever the problem is, it seems to be centred around the smaller guest-house. If the characters try poking around on their own, see *Rumours in the Monastery*, page 71. Otherwise, they can make contact with the abbot and learn what is going on directly from the source.

The Abbot's Tale

Abbot Gerin has no time for the characters unless they present their Blessed Rings and even then he has to be reminded of the meaning of the rings by Ogier before he pays attention. Once he realises that he has a band of elite church-sanctioned warrior-monks on his doorstep, he decides to put them to good use.

'Brothers in Christ, a terrible crime has been committed within these hallowed walls. The hermit, James of the Loire, was staying here in Saint-Mesmin and some monster has murdered him in the night! By God, we must find the murderer!'

Gerin tells the characters the events of the last night. A group of mummers arrived at the monastery and performed the Mystery Play of Abraham and Isaac for the hermit and a select audience of important monks at the guesthouse. The mummers left and one-by-one the monks left the guesthouse, leaving James to sleep. This morning, he was found dead.

The news of James' death has not yet been announced; the abbot intends to send word to the Bishop of Orleans, who is expecting the hermit. The sooner the killer is found, the better.

The Inspired Abbot: If the abbot is the one who was inspired by the Joyous One, then Gerin brims with confidence even as he tells the characters about the murder of James. It is as though all this were part of God's ineffable plan and that James' death was no more cruel than the fall of leaves in autumn.

Questioning the Abbot

The characters doubtless have several questions for the abbot; Gerin will answer questions but there is an air of nervousness that suggests he is unused to having his word questioned, and does not like it one bit.

Tell us more about these mummers: The abbot shrugs. James demanded entertainment (a complete lie, of course – it was the impetuous abbot who was bored) and so Gerin sent a monk out to find a minstrel or a player of some sort. He returned with a band of travelling mummers. They seemed a little strange but they were willing to play for the monks.

What happened to the mummers? They left in the dark, which was a little unusual. They must be somewhere down the road. James was still alive when they left.

Who attended the Mystery Play? The abbot himself, Almoner Ogier, Cellarer Thomas, Hosteller Julien, Infirmarian Michel, Precentor Urian, Sacrist Helier and James.

Who was the last person to see James alive? God alone knows. The monks drank a great deal of wine during the play and there was much confusion when one of their number got drunk and started an argument. The abbot is initially unwilling to elaborate but if the characters press him, he says that Thomas got drunk and complained about the abbot's treatment of James and that Hellier, Ogier and Julien joined in on opposite sides. The situation nearly came to blows.

Investigating the Murder Scene

The characters may ask to see the body of James, which is still in the guesthouse. The small guesthouse is for visiting nobles and their retinue, so it is well appointed and quite luxurious. There are three rooms; James chose to stay in the smallest of them. There is a large and downy-soft bed in the room but James' bedclothes lie on the floor – the hermit preferred to sleep on the cold hard ground. The body has been placed on the bed, however.

There is a jug of water on the table and a water basin lies fallen on the floor, in the middle of a large puddle. James' nightshirt is soaked through and his hair is still damp. A First Aid, Medicine or Swim test confirms that James drowned, probably by having his head held down in the basin. The hermit was a small and elderly man who could not have put up much resistance.

If Thomas is the killer, then there are signs of a clumsy struggle – both the victim and the killer were smashed against walls.

If Michel or Hellier was the killer, then James was obviously overpowered by a very strong foe – there are no other wounds on James' body other than ligature marks where the killer grabbed James' neck with a vice-like grip and drowned the hermit.

Supernatural Divination: A Hoffman Device shows no sign of magic in James' room but there is a small and fading trace in the room where the players put on their mystery play. If the characters still have the ghoul idol from Paris, they can use it to question James' corpse – see *Questioning James*.

Rumours in the Monastery

The death of James sets tongues wagging in Saint-Mesmin. An Influence or Streetwise test gets the characters a flood of rumours, some more useful than others:

- James was killed by river-spirits, who crawled out of the Loire and drowned him. Beware the melusines!
- Julien should have been abbot – Gerin took his place and Julien has been bitter ever since.
- James loathed Abbot Gerin and little wonder – the abbot is about as saintly as a two-penny whore.
- Abbot Gerin is the son of... well, it would not be wise to speak of it too loudly. Let us say that James would have seen Gerin's father very soon indeed.
- Michel is a madman! Beware of him! It is shameful that he was allowed so close to James – no doubt his friend Julien had something to do with that! In fact, I'll wager that Michel killed James!
- Those mummers were very strange indeed. I saw one of them near the library last night, as if waiting for someone. What would an illiterate wandering player want with the library? It's closed at night, anyway.
- I swear I saw a light in the library tower last night, on the top floor.
- Thomas is an old sod but he speaks the truth when he's soused. I saw him in the brewing cellar a few days ago, complaining about the abbot and his ways.
- Old Ogier didn't like the hermit. He doesn't like poor people. Shame he's our almoner, isn't it?
- Have you heard what – or rather, who! – that scamp Helier was doing in the chapel? Two girls and one of them a novice from the nunnery? Why, if the abbot didn't protect Helier, he'd have been drowned in the river years ago by some jealous husband!

Questioning Almoner Ogier

Ogier's recollection of the night before is coloured by a lot of red wine and his opinion of Abbot Gerin. It was an absolute disgrace that the abbot chose to mark the visit of such a holy man with drinking and play-acting, when they should have spent the time in prayer. Yes, Ogier had a lot to drink but it is for his digestion, nothing more.

He tells the characters that last night was the last straw – the abbot may be the son of the Bishop of Orleans but family connections cannot protect Gerin any more. Saint-Mesmin shall not be allowed to fall further into sin and corruption!

Ogier the Inspired: If Ogier is the monk inspired by the Joyous One, then he speaks of how the death of James has turned Saint-Mesmin into a blessed shrine, just as the death of Thomas Becket sanctified Canterbury Cathedral. This makes it doubly important that Gerin be removed from his office.

Questioning Cellarer Thomas

Thomas deals with the death of James by drinking. The characters find him in the wine cellar, out of his skull once again. In this mood, he is willing to talk about anything. He was there last night but remembers barely a word. The play was awful and the young boy they had playing Isaac could not act. It was all the abbot's idea, as usual – another damn foolish idea. Gerin is worse than useless, he is dragging Saint-Mesmin down. The PCs might as well get drunk with him and seek truth in the arms of Bacchus here in the wine cellar, because there is no truth in God in the chapel upstairs, not with all the sin and depravity that goes on here.

Thomas will also explain Gerin's parentage and mention that this nepotism especially rankles with Julien.

Thomas the Inspired: An inspired Thomas does not seem especially drunk, despite the vast quantity of wine he has consumed. He looks around him as if seeing a marble palace of great beauty, not a grimy wine cellar.

Thomas the Killer: If Thomas is the killer, then he has several cuts and bruises on his hands. He claims that he fell during the night.

Questioning Hosteller Julien

Julien is cold and composed even when discussing James' death. He regards the characters with deep-set, stern eyes and gives the impression of a hawk hunched over a meal. Last night, he says, Abbot Gerin once again disgraced himself, and worse, he permitted a holy man to die within the very walls of the monastery. Gerin, he says, was given the title of abbot most unjustly and now that crime has come back to haunt Saint-Mesmin. The abbot may not have been the killer – Julien has no idea who it was and would not make false accusations – but the ultimate responsibility for the crime must lie with Gerin.

He had only a little wine last night and remembers events with crystal clarity. The play was strange and confused; there was a masked narrator with a rasping voice that had an oddly hypnotic quality. Even Julien found himself to be a little entranced. James, however, very much disliked the play and once the mummers left, the hermit said that he would go to bed immediately.

Thomas shouted that the abbot was a fool for inviting the mummers to the monastery, as it was an unworthy and sinful thing to subject their guest to the mummers' nonsense. That rogue Helier claimed that the hermit was probably grateful for the entertainment, as anything is better than sitting in a barrel and that they should all praise Gerin's wisdom. Ogier and Julien both turned on Helier's foolishness and a larger argument broke out about Gerin's leadership. It is not the first time the monks have argued about the abbot but it was an especially vicious one. Julien stopped arguing to attend to his friend Michel, who was not feeling well – loud noises and raised voices upset the Infirmary.

Julien the Killer: If Julien is the killer, then he draws the characters' attention to the sins of Gerin and Helier. He repeats rumours about Helier defiling the chapel with the most grotesque sexual misdeeds and asks that the characters speak to the Bishop of Orleans about the abbot's actions. Julien cannot approach the bishop directly, as it would be seen as an attempt to take the abbey for himself but the characters are outsiders and can therefore speak freely.

Questioning Infirmary Michel

Michel is wary of being questioned; he knows that he is sometimes victim to fits of blind rage and that he is therefore the prime suspect in the murder. He tries to win the characters' respect as fighting men; if he wanted to kill a man, he would do it on the battlefield, as he once did. He tells the characters his past – he was a warrior but was wounded in battle and came to Saint-Mesmin to die. Julien took him in, healed him, so he owes the Hosteller a great debt.

Last night, Michel attended the mummer's play. It did not agree with him and gave him a fearsome headache. He remembers little of the night but he does remember Julien asking him something and it seemed important at the time. If the characters press him, he admits that he suffers from strange fits of rage, where he can remember nothing except a black fog while he commits acts of terrible brutality.

Michel the Inspired: If Michel is inspired, then he shows no sign of being at all inconvenienced by his wound. Indeed, he strikes the characters as being a confident, dangerous man, not the broken figure the other monks described.

Michel the Killer: If Michel is the killer, then he is evasive and sullen; he helped his friend Julien while under the influence of one of his black rages and is now overcome with shame and guilt. He has no desire to confess, though – why should he confess to something he did when he was not in his right mind?

Questioning Precentor Urian

Urian evades the characters' questions and whenever possible he turns their inquiries back on them. He needs to know how much the characters know and what they intend so he can report back to the Bishop of Orleans. He claims that the mummer's show last night was unremarkable and while there was an argument, it was all down to drunken Thomas and his tantrums. He does not know who killed James - but, well, Michel was there last night and everyone in the monastery knows about the warrior's black rages.

Urian the Inspired: If Urian is the inspired victim of the Joyous One, then he hastens to finish his conversation with the Player Characters, so he can run off to the library to consult the *Scrolls of Edessa*.

Urian the Killer: If Urian is the killer, then he needs to keep the characters' suspicions away from the abbot. He will keep blaming Michel and hint darkly that Julien may have convinced Michel to kill the hermit.

Questioning Sacrist Helier

Helier is the youngest of the monks and squirms like a naughty schoolboy when questioned. He has no idea what the Order represents and has no respect for the guardian priests. He will ignore any questions that irritate him. If the characters hint that they know about his illicit relationships, then Helier claims complete innocence and denies everything.

According to Helier, last night they attended an amusing diversion with a band of mummers. James the Hermit went to bed, mercifully, sparing the rest of them another evening of boring conversation. Thomas livened things up by getting drunk and bitter old Ogier and Julien started whining about Gerin again. Those old fools are just jealous that the bishop saw Gerin's wisdom and potential and exalted him over them. He has no idea who killed James but guesses that it was probably that crazy Michel.

Helier the Killer: Helier's demeanour does not change at all if he was the killer but if the characters intimidate him, then he starts planning to flee the monastery.

Questioning James

If the characters still have the ghoul idol from Paris, they can animate James the Hermit's corpse and interrogate him. Obviously, this should be done privately, as even the most open-minded monk would be alarmed by a talking corpse. The hermit is understandably confused by his temporary resurrection.

James recalls that he was incensed by the mummers - the leader of the troupe was a masked figure who seemed to exude a strange, unsettling aura. After the play, the hermit went to bed, determined to tell the bishop of Orleans about the poor state of the monastery. As he was making his nightly ablutions, someone entered his room and attacked him. He did not see the face of his attacker but...

Sacrist Helier: ...the attacker came at him quickly and viciously.

Precentor Urian: ...the attacker apologised before striking him.

Hosteller Julien: ...the attacker was old and only barely managed to overpower the hermit.

Cellarer Thomas: ...the attacker was clumsy.

Infirmarian Michel: ...the attacker was very strong and killed him very quickly.

The Library

The library of Saint-Mesmin contains an impressive collection of occult books and scrolls, and according to rumours, one of the mummers visited it last night. The library tower is kept locked at night but all of the senior monks have keys.

Searching the library without the help of the inspired monk is largely pointless; characters may make a Very Hard (-60%) Perception test to look for something out of place; if successful, they find the *Scrolls of Edessa* slightly out of place.

The body of the young scribe murdered by the Joyous One is on the roof; if the characters check the roof, they find the body. Otherwise, it is discovered in *Crows on the Roof*.

Events in the Monastery

These events can happen at any time while the characters are investigating the mystery.

Helier accuses Michel

Almost everyone in the monastery privately leaps to the conclusion that Infirmarian Michel is responsible for the crime, as the former warrior is notorious for outbursts of violence. No-one dares to openly accuse Michel initially but as rumours continue to circulate, Helier eventually gives voice to these beliefs. He goes to Abbot Gerin and demands that Michel be arrested and put to trial by the monks.

As the guardian priests are the best trained warriors in the monastery, Gerin asks them to capture Michel and imprison him so he can be given a proper trial. The monk can be found in the monastery's infirmary. Michel, unsurprisingly, refuses to co-operate, so the characters will have to disarm him and knock him out. If the characters inflict a potentially lethal blow on Michel, assume that the monk is severely wounded but manages to survive.

Michel is placed in a cellar room and the door is locked to prevent his escape. Later that day, his friend Julien visits him, unlocking the cell door to ministrates to the afflicted Michel.

Michel the Inspired: If Michel is the one inspired by the Joyous One, then he puts up a surprisingly good fight against the monks before they finally bring him down. When Julien visits Michel, the madman kills Julien by dashing the older monk's head against the wall repeatedly until his skull shatters. He then hurls himself into the wall, crumples into a corner of the cell and calls for help.

When the monks arrive, Michel claims that Helier ambushed Julien and killed him. Michel tried to stop Helier but the younger monk was possessed of supernatural strength. The scene is certainly something of a mystery - if Michel killed Julien, why did he then not escape and why would he kill the one monk who believes in his innocence?

Crows on the Roof

The characters notice an unusual flock of crows on the roof of the library tower. If they climb up to the tower (requiring an Acrobatics test or a ladder), or climb the church spire to see over the smaller tower, they find a monk's corpse lying on the roof of the library. The crows are feeding on the young man's remains.

The monk is identified as Brother Quentin. It looks like his neck was broken when someone swung his body out of the library window and threw him up onto the roof - a feat requiring superhuman strength. His hand is covered in candle-wax, suggesting he was holding a candle when he was killed.

Urian and The Gold

One of the other visitors in the guesthouse is Theobald, the bishop's spy. He was supposed to make contact with Precentor Urian, hand over the monk's pay and get his report on Abbot Gerin's latest

The Scrolls of Edessa

The *Scrolls of Edessa* are the works of a 9th century pilgrim in the east, who travelled through the deserts of Syria in an attempt to follow the fabled path of St. Thomas, who was said to have ministered to the lands of India and beyond. He failed and was forced to turn back and wrote the *Scrolls of Edessa* in that Byzantine city before he perished. The first few scrolls are a travelogue; the latter section is the ravings of a man dying of sunstroke.

The relevant section of the *Scrolls of Edessa* is a description of two villages that the traveller passed through near Palmyra. Both of these villages, despite Syria being part of the Islamic Umayyad Caliphate, professed a strange form of Judaism that honoured Solomon above all other kings and prophets.

shameful misdeeds, but with the recent chaos in the monastery, Theobald decides that his mission can wait and decides to leave the monastery.

He is spotted by one of the monks, who raises the alarm – that figure hurrying across the marshes could be the devil who murdered James the Hermit! Theobald is surrounded and surrenders to the monks but refuses to explain *why* he was leaving the monastery or, more suspiciously, why he is carrying a pouch of gold coins. If the characters question Theobald forcefully, he admits that he is a servant of the Bishop of Orleans and explains Precentor Urian's role in the monastery.

The Killer Strikes Again!

In fact, this murder is committed by the Inspired madman to throw the characters off his trail.

Abbot Gerin: The abbot calls Helier to meet with him by the docks and then wrestles Helier into a barrel and throws him into the river, where the younger monk – and with him, all of Gerin's past sins and misdeeds – drowns. The barrel runs aground a short distance downriver. Searching the barrel for clues turns up a scrap of rich fur, indicating that whoever killed Helier was wealthy. The abbot has a matching collar of fur, which he tries burning in the fire-grate in his room after murdering Helier.

Almoner Ogier: Ogier murders Helier in the chapel. He waits until Helier goes to the sacristy in the company of the young pilgrim Paula, then follows the lovers into the chapel and bludgeons Helier to death with an ornamental crucifix. Paula witnesses the crime but is so terrified and traumatised she is driven out of her wits and can only say 'the terrible old man... the terrible old man...' over and over again. Ogier, Julien, Thomas and Michel are all older monks.

Precentor Urian: Urian asks Helier to meet him in the library tower and then hurls Helier from the third floor to the stone courtyard below. Examining Helier's body turns up a clue – he has a crude version of the Seal of Solomon carved into his forehead. Lore (Occult) identifies the symbol, while First Aid suggests the wounds were caused by a small knife, such as those used for cutting feathers for use as quill pens in the scriptorium.

Infirmarian Michel: Michel has already thrown suspicion on Helier, so instead he targets Ogier, who has always annoyed the warrior. He goes to the beggar Iaocaul and tells him that James gave a huge treasure to the monastery, with explicit instructions that it was to be distributed to the poor by the almoner. As this rumour spreads, a crowd of beggars and fishermen gathers outside the almonry. Ogier tries to shoo the crowd away and the shout goes up that the notoriously bitter and lazy old monk is just trying to keep the hermit's treasure for himself. Unless the characters intervene, Ogier is trampled to death as a mob of beggars loots the almonry.

Iaocaul flees the monastery after this incident but if the characters recapture him, they can discover what he was told.

Cellarer Thomas: Thomas poisons the wine of Helier and the abbot at dinner that evening. The abbot, fortunately, is too nervous about the bishop's impending visit to drink much but Helier makes up for him, quaffing mug after mug. (If Helier has been arrested, then Thomas targets Ogier instead.) The victim of the poisoning keels over in the middle of dinner, stone dead.

The Bishop Arrives

News travels fast. Word of the murder of James the Hermit reached Orleans almost as soon as the characters learned of it and Bishop Helgot realised that he would have to attend to the situation personally, if only to ensure that his own name never became associated with the catastrophe. He arrives in the late evening, accompanied by an entourage of two dozen guards, priests and servants. He sends word that tomorrow morning, he wishes the senior monks of the monastery to meet him, along with the guardian priests.

The characters have until dawn to find the killer – and the madman.

The final Accusation

After Lauds the next morning, Bishop Helgot calls all the (surviving) senior monks together, along with the guardian priests. The bishop takes charge of the meeting, overruling the abbot (if the characters do not yet know about Helgot's relationship to Gerin, then seeing the two of them together makes it clear they are father and son). Helgot demands that the guardian priests identify the murderer of James the Hermit, the scribe Quentin and whoever was killed by the madman in *The Killer Strikes Again*.

Correctly Accusing the Killer

If the characters correctly identify the murderer of James the Hermit, the murderer's reaction depends on his identity:

Helier: The monk turns to Abbot Gerin, begging him for clemency. *'I did it to protect you, Gerin! The hermit would have ruined everything if he told your fath.'* The bishop cuts him off at this point, saying icily *'The abbot's past deeds are not part of this. You have confessed enough, Helier. Guards, take him away.'*

Urian: Urian tries blackmail when accused. *'Helgot, you can't do this to me! Not after all I've done for you! Not with what I know. Your fat idiot son is the real villain here, you bastard!'* Again, the bishop cuts him off and the guards seize Urian.

Julien: Julien stands with great dignity and admits his guilt. *'This monastery has a proud tradition of service to God – a tradition that your son has utterly desecrated. James was a sacrifice to wash away in blood all that your son has done to us.'*

Thomas: Thomas breaks down in tears if accused. *'Lord help me, I thought it was the abbot! I wanted to kill the abbot! He deserves it, not James! Never James!'*

Michel: Michel sags as if struck by a physical blow when accused, then admits his guilt. Before the guards can seize him, though, Julien is overcome by a fit of conscience and stands to admit his part in the crime. Julien begs that Michel be spared punishment – it was Michel's hand but his will that killed James the Hermit.

Incorrectly Accusing the Killer

If the characters pick the wrong monk, then the accused blusters and proclaims his evidence even as he is dragged away by the guards (assuming the monk they pick is not the madman).

Correctly Accusing the Madman

If the players have worked out that there is a servant of the Joyous One in the monastery and correctly identify the madman, then the inspired lunatic makes one last attempt to murder the bishop. Run this as a conventional fight scene, using the Inspired Monks statistics.

Incorrectly Accusing the Madman

If the characters do not know there is a madman in the monastery, or blame the wrong monk for it, then the madman is still at large. After the guardian priests leave the monastery, he murders Bishop Helgot and escapes. The characters will hear news of this murder when they reach the next town.

Leaving the Monastery

Bishop Helgot dismisses the characters immediately after the meeting. To speed them on their way, he offers them the use of the horses he brought with him from Orleans, which should allow them to make up any lost time.

Young Monk

Use these characteristics for Abbot Gerin, Helier, Urian, or any of the younger monks in the monastery.

For named characters, add the following skills:

Abbot Gerin: Courtesy 40%, Influence 60%, Ride 40%, Track 40%

Helier: Evade 30%, Ride 30%, Seduction 65%, Stealth 60%, Track 20%

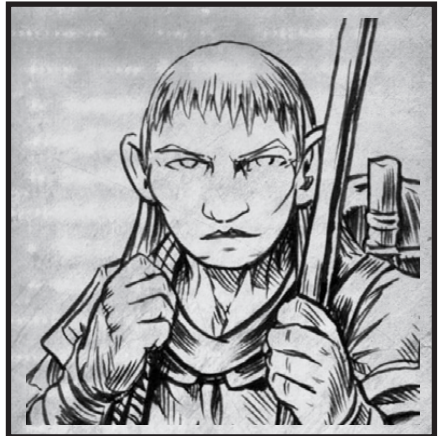
Urian: Craft (illumination) 40%, Lore (Occult) 60%, Perception 65%

		1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP	<i>Combat Actions</i>	2
STR	11	1-3	Right Leg	-/4	<i>Damage Modifier</i>	0
CON	10	4-6	Left Leg	-/4	<i>Magic Points</i>	12
SIZ	10	7-9	Abdomen	-/5	<i>Movement</i>	8m
INT	10	10-12	Chest	-/6	<i>Strike Rank</i>	+11
POW	12	13-15	Right Arm	-/3		
DEX	11	16-18	Left Arm	-/3		
CHA	9	19-20	Head	-/4		

Armour: None

Equipment: None

Notable Skills: Insight 30%, Language (French) 70%, Language (Latin) 40%, Lore (Christian Theology) 40%, Perception 35%, Resilience 30%, Stealth 30%, Swim 40%, Unarmed 30%



Old Monk

Use these statistics for Ogier, Julien, Thomas, Bishop Helgot or another elderly monk.

For named characters, add the following skills:

Ogier: Evaluate 60%, Streetwise 40%

Julien: Courtesy 40%, Lore (Christian Theology) 80%, Lore (History) 60%, Medicine 50%

Thomas: Brawn 40%, Craft (Brewing) 40%, Resilience 60%

Bishop Ogier: Courtesy 60%, Influence 80%, Lore (Christian Theology) 60%

		1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP	<i>Combat Actions</i>	2
STR	8	1-3	Right Leg	-/4	<i>Damage Modifier</i>	-1d2
CON	10	4-6	Left Leg	-/4	<i>Magic Points</i>	14
SIZ	10	7-9	Abdomen	-/5	<i>Movement</i>	8m
INT	13	10-12	Chest	-/6	<i>Strike Rank</i>	+11
POW	14	13-15	Right Arm	-/3		
DEX	8	16-18	Left Arm	-/3		
CHA	10	19-20	Head	-/4		

Armour: None

Equipment: None

Notable Skills: Insight 40%, Language (French) 80%, Language (Latin) 60%, Lore (Christian Theology) 60%, Perception 35%, Resilience 30%



Michel

The infirmarian is one of the few trained warriors in the monastery; despite his wounds, he is still a skilled combatant. Michel will only be encountered in armour if he has time to visit his room, where he keeps his old armour and weapons.

		1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP	<i>Combat Actions</i>	2
STR	14	1-3	Right Leg	2/6	<i>Damage Modifier</i>	+1d2
CON	13	4-6	Left Leg	2/6	<i>Magic Points</i>	11
SIZ	14	7-9	Abdomen	2/7	<i>Movement</i>	8m
INT	10	10-12	Chest	2/8	<i>Strike Rank</i>	+11 (+7 in armour)
POW	11	13-15	Right Arm	2/5		
DEX	11	16-18	Left Arm	2/5		
CHA	7	19-20	Head	2/6		

Armour: None/Leather and Chain
Equipment: None/Warsword and Shield
Notable Skills: First Aid 50%, Language (French) 50%, Language (Latin) 20%, Lore (Christian Theology) 40%, Perception 45%, Resilience 50%, Unarmed 60%



WEAPONS

Type	Size	Reach	Weapon Skill	Damage	AP/HP
Warsword	M	M	65%	1D8	6/10
& Kite Shield	H	S	65%	1D4	4/18

Inspired Monk

Use these statistics for whichever monk is inspired by the Joyous One.

		1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP	<i>Combat Actions</i>	3
STR	17	1-3	Right Leg	-/6	<i>Damage Modifier</i>	+1d2
CON	15	4-6	Left Leg	-/6	<i>Magic Points</i>	16
SIZ	12	7-9	Abdomen	-/7	<i>Movement</i>	8m
INT	10	10-12	Chest	-/8	<i>Strike Rank</i>	+14
POW	16	13-15	Right Arm	-/5		
DEX	18	16-18	Left Arm	-/5		
CHA	12	19-20	Head	-/6		

Armour: None

Equipment: Poisoned Daggers

Notable Skills: Acrobatics 50%, Athletics 70%, Brawn 60%, Influence 50%, Insight 60%, Perception 60%, Persistence 90%, Resilience 60%, Stealth 70%, Unarmed 60%



WEAPONS

<i>Type</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Reach</i>	<i>Weapon Skill</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>AP/HP</i>
Dagger	S	S	30%	1D4+1	6/8

The dagger is coated with Blade Venom

Verse 5.4

THE HARVEST



There are old gods sleeping under the world. They were worshipped before Christ and before the Romans – they were worshipped before the ice. Now they slumber but their dreams echo in the spirit realm. A nameless entity – call it the Shambler – was once worshipped here but now it is long forgotten. The Joyous One sensed the Shambler and to throw the guardian priests off its trail, the spirit has inspired a new cult for the old god.

The Harvest of Blood

The cult of the Shambler once offered the creature sacrifices of blood to placate it; in exchange, the Shambler would bless the harvest and ensure the coming year would be bountiful. The harvest has been neglected for millennia but the Joyous One has inspired the peasants of the small hamlet of Yves-Sur-Fleuve to worship the Shambler once more. The peasants have kidnapped dozens of travellers, neighbours and other unfortunates and harvested them in the fields.

The Shambler is stirring in its slumber. Already, it has the power to bless its followers and to control the surrounding countryside. If it continues to feed, it will awaken fully... and that will not be a good thing at all.

The Villages

The mummers put on their play in the village of Yves-Sur-Fleuve, close to the hill where the Shambler sleeps. Most of their sacrifices come from the neighbouring village of Heudreny, which has been under siege by the inspired cultists for three nights.

Scythes of the Shambler

One of the blessings of the Shambler is the gift of magical scythes. The scythes look like worked bronze but are sharper than Damascene steel as long as the Shambler's blessing persists. The cultists of the Shambler are all armed with these scythes, making them dangerous even to a guardian priest. The scythes lose their power if taken away from the Shambler's presence, or if the Shambler falls back into a deeper slumber.

Sever (Critical Success Only): Usable only if the attack hits a limb or the head. If the attack would normally deal a Serious Wound, it inflicts a Major Wound instead.

	Damage Dice	STR/DEX	Size	Reach	Combat Manoeuvres	ENC	AP/HP
Scythe	1D10+1	13/9	L	L	Bleed, Trip Opponent, Sunder, Sever	3	4/10

Signs of the Shambler

The trail from Orleans follows the river Loire down through the County of Anjou. The mummer band has avoided the larger towns like Tours, apparently hoping to lose their pursuers in the wilderness, but the characters have managed to stay on the track of the caravan. The monks lost time at the monastery of Orleans but the fugitive spirit cannot be more than a few days ahead.

The Head on the Road

As the characters travel along, one of them spots a pile of sacks, apparently abandoned in a little hollow at the side of the tree-shaded road. Two of the sacks contain apples, obviously recently harvested from an orchard. The third sack contains a half-dozen human heads, also freshly harvested – the neck stumps still ooze blood and spinal fluids. The heads are a mix of ages and genders. A close examination shows that the necks and chins of all the heads are unusually filthy, as if they were covered in soil until recently (the victims were buried up to the neck in the soil before being harvested).

It's Off The Scale!

If the players try using a Hoffman Device, then they detect something very, very big and very, very powerful to the north-west, in the village of Yves-Sur-Fleuve. Very, very, very big.

The sacks were left by a pair of thieves, Hugo and Bosamon. They crept into Yves-Sur-Fleuve and stole what they thought were sacks full of freshly harvested food. The two thieves hid in this little hollow to open their loot and were so horrified when they found the bag of heads that they panicked and fled.

A Hard (-40%) Track test lets a character find two trails leading away from this dell. One runs back down the road, the way the PCs just came. They did not see anyone unusual along the road, but there were several hiding places where some unfortunate could have lain concealed. The other trail heads north across country to a small village, Heudreny.

Following the Trails: If the characters follow the trail across country, then it ends abruptly in a muddy tangle in the middle of a field. Another Difficult (-20%) Track roll is needed to decipher what happened here. If successful, the characters piece together the sequence of events:

- Whoever left the hollow by the road ran towards the village of Heudreny.
- Several people approached from the direction of Heudreny. They laid several heavy bundles down on the ground for a while.
- There was a scuffle and someone lost an awful lot of blood. A successful Perception test lets the character find a foot, recently chopped off and thrown in the undergrowth. The cut was made with a very, very sharp blade.
- The larger group picked up their bundles and travelled north-west, circling around Heudreny.

The truth is that one of the thieves, Bosamon, fled straight into a band of cultists who had just raided an outlying farm just outside of Heudreny. The cultists chopped off his foot when he tried to run away again. They dragged Bosamon and their other captives off to Yves-Sur-Fleuve to be buried in the fields around the hill.

If the characters follow the other trail, then they find a terrified Hugo huddled in a tree. He has obviously been hiding there all night. He is extremely nervous, requiring a Difficult (-20%) Influence test to talk him down. If the characters manage to win his trust, he tells them what happened.

'Bosamon and I... we were so hungry, you see, so hungry, and we heard they were all rich up at Yves-Sur-Fleuve. We stole from their barn and then we opened the sacks... merciful God, they were all looking at me! Why did they have a bag of heads? Why did they have a bag of heads?'

The Empty House

The characters come across this small farm-house at the edge of the village of Heudreny. The place was attacked sometime in the last few days - the door has been cut into pieces as if hacked down by an axe and there are signs of bloodshed within. Bizarrely, the farm-house has not been looted; there are still animals in the pens and a spilled cooking-pot on the ashes in the hearth. Bandits would certainly have taken such things if they attacked.



As soon as the characters pass this farmhouse, they are within the domain of the Shambler. If any of the characters are supernaturally sensitive they know that they are about to cross an invisible boundary. The Shambler has limited control over the land within its domain – it can move physical landmarks and misdirect travellers. This means that the characters will find themselves unable to leave the Shambler’s domain. If they try to walk back to the road, they find themselves turned around and walking back towards Heudreny, or find their path blocked by a wood or a ravine that was not there before. A stream might become a raging torrent, or a gentle slope imperceptibly be transformed into an insurmountable cliff.

This horror ends only when the Shambler is killed or returns to slumber. Transformations in the landscape are accompanied by a horrific rumbling, cracking noise from deep below, as if giants were shattering the very bones of the earth to remake the surface world.

Heudreny

Heudreny is a small hamlet of a dozen houses in the midst of rich farmland. The harvest this year seems especially bountiful. Fields of golden grain sway with the sheer weight of the crops, trees creak as unnaturally large and succulent fruit hang from their branches and the cows are fatter than rich Benedictines. At this time of year, the place should be thronged with workers bringing in the harvest but it is deserted when the characters arrive. There are no obvious signs of life and several of the houses were barricaded shut but these barricades have been torn down.

The path through the village winds on through the fields and woods, leading to Yves-Sur-Fleuve.

A Trail: A Hard (-40%) Tracking test lets the characters find evidence that a small group of people fled the village recently, heading east into the woods. If the characters follow this path, it will lead them to *The Cave of the Survivors*.

The Spy: There is one person still alive in Heudreny and he is not native to the village at all. It is one of the cultists from Yves-Sur-Fleuve, here to watch the village for intruders. He is hiding in the fields nearby. Make an opposed Perception test between a PC and the young cultist’s Stealth, giving the boy a +20% bonus thanks to the cover.

If the characters follow the trail to the cave of the survivors, they will be followed by the spy. He must then make another Stealth test, without the bonus, to stay hidden as he stalks them. He will try to wait until the characters have revealed the location of the survivors but if the characters discover him before they reach the cave, he will turn and run while shouting for help. Unless the characters kill him within six rounds, his shouts will alert the Shambler. A few moments later, the Shambler uses its power over the landscape to drag the woodland containing the characters to the edge of Yves-Sur-Fleuve.

The Cave Of The Survivors

The characters follow the faint trail through the woods until it ends in a small cave. Hiding in this cave is a family of five peasants from Heudreny – a farmer named Jean, his wife, their two sons and his aged mother. They fled their village when the madmen from Yves-Sur-Fleuve attacked. If the characters can prove they are not more cultists, they can speak to Jean and learn what happened.

What’s Going On? *We were attacked by our neighbours. The people from Yves-Sur-Fleuve, across the river... they just went mad and started dragging people away into the woods! Anyone who fought back... they killed them, butchered them! They are devils, I tell you! Devils in human form!*

Have You Seen A Band Of Mummers? *What? Well...yes. A caravan came through and put on a mystery play in Yves-Sur-Fleuve a few days ago. It was the tale of the Exodus, how Moses found the burning bush and learned of God’s plan for the chosen people. Why do you ask?*

What's Unusual About Yves-Sur-Fleuve? *Nothing! They were our neighbours, our cousins. It's just a village.*

At this point, Jean's senile old mother pipes up, hissing 'God cursed them, long ago, he did. They worshipped false idols when the world was young. The devil's spawn, that's what they all are!'

Where Can We Take You That You'll Be Safe? *No-where! You don't understand – we cannot escape. We're all trapped here. The ground moves.*

What Do You Mean, The Ground Moves? *It shifts. We've tried to run to the road, to get to Tours or anywhere but we can't find the road. I have lived her for more than 30 years and I do not know this place any more! The ground moves!*

If the characters have not dealt with the spy yet, then he alerts the Shambler. The characters hear a strange ululating cry from somewhere nearby (a Perception test lets the characters spot where the spy is hiding) but then a moment later the ground begins to shake as the Shambler drags the cave and the wood towards itself as a man might pull a cup towards him by dragging the tablecloth. The characters can see the earth churn and break beyond the line of the trees.

The cave where the family took shelter begins to close like a mouth – unless the characters act immediately, Jean's wife and sons will be crushed by the shifting rocks. Rescuing the unfortunate peasants from the cave requires a Difficult (–20%) Evade test; if the character fails, he still drags one peasant out but suffers 2d6 damage to one arm or leg.

If the characters have already dealt with the spy, then they can make their own way to Yves-Sur-Fleuve and retain the element of surprise.

Servants of the Shambler

At first glance, Yves-Sur-Fleuve looks little different to its neighbour, Heudreny. A small stream runs through it, flowing south to join up with the Loire several miles away. The village is surrounded by fields and croplands that are, if anything, even more lush and heavy than those the characters have already seen – and the characters can see a crowd of people in one of the wheat fields, preparing to cut down the ripe grain.

The only unusual feature of Yves-Sur-Fleuve is the round green hill just outside the village. In the autumn sun, the characters can see some grey stones arranged in a ring on top of the hill. The green hill is surrounded by wheat-fields, one of which has already been harvested.

In The Village

The only people left in the village are the old and the very young. It could be any other little farming village during the harvest; there is a feeling of celebration in the air. If the characters want to confront any of the villagers, they can do so but the villagers profess complete ignorance of any unusual activity. It is the harvest, so everyone is out in the fields gathering in the crops. Surely the characters will stay for the evening's celebrations.

An Insight test confirms that everyone in the village is insane. They genuinely believe that whatever is going on out in the fields is part of the usual harvest. Vindictive characters can start slaughtering cultists if they wish.

Surprise or Surprised?

If the characters arrive in Yves-Sur-Fleuve willingly, having either gone there directly from Heudreny or via the forest after dealing with the spy, then they can either sneak into the village or just walk in. Either way, the village is nearly deserted, as most of the cultists are out in the fields getting ready for the harvest.

If the characters were dragged to the village by the Shambler, then they find themselves at the edge of the grain fields. The harvest cannot be delayed, so the cultists send only a few of their number – say, one per Player Character, plus two – out to deal with the newcomers, while the rest of them prepare to harvest the crops. See *Out in the Fields*.

Ancient Stones: The church in the middle of the little town has been rebuilt many times but some of the older stones used in its walls are old indeed. A character who closely examines these old stones notices some unusual carvings, which depict a figure with a scythe or other curved weapon battling what seems to be a worm. A Hard (-40%) Lore (Occult) or Lore (History) test suggests that this might be a depiction of some saint battling evil.

Out in the Fields

Most of the villagers – some 30 people – are out in the large wheatfield near the green hill. The characters cannot see this without entering the field but there are another 20 victims buried up to their necks in the soil here, too. When the villagers start cutting down the grain with their scythes, they will also slice the heads off the buried victims, sacrificing them to the Shambler.

Of the 30 cultists, 10 have scythes. The rest are armed only with daggers and clubs, if at all. If the cultists know there are intruders nearby, then they send eight of their number including two scythe-wielders to hold off the intruders while the rest continue with the harvest.

If the characters approach the field, they can hear screams and shouts from the middle of the crops, as the buried victims beg for help or mercy or a swift death. Even if they are decapitated, they will be denied the last option, as the Shambler will feed on their souls and they will suffer for aeons.

It is easy (+40%) to hide in the crop field, thanks to the cover offered by the tall wheat.

The Harvest Begins

At an appropriate juncture, the harvest begins. The cultists begin to slowly advance through the wheatfield, swinging their scythes as they go. The buried victims begin to scream and then one-by-one are abruptly cut off as the severed heads go rolling across the field. The other cultists follow on along behind the line of scythe-wielders, collecting the cut wheat and the severed heads.

When a victim is sacrificed, the ground shakes slightly as though an electric thrill ran through it. This is the physical manifestation of the Shambler consuming the soul of the sacrifice. The longer the characters wait before interrupting the harvest, the stronger the Shambler becomes.

The Green Hill

The green hill with its cryptic standing stones is not a landmark or a place sacred to the Shambler – it is the Shambler. Uncounted centuries of dirt and mould cover the monster’s rugose hide, and there is a gargantuan mound of flesh and bone beneath the soil. The standing stones are not stone at all – they are the bony teeth on the back of the Shambler that thrust through the earth.

In game terms, there are 20 victims in the field. Each round, 1d8 of them are sacrificed to the Shambler. If the characters interrupt the ceremony and force the cultists to fight instead of harvesting sacrifices, the number sacrificed each round drops to 1d4 and then to zero if the characters kill all the scythe-wielding cultists. Keep track of the number of victims sacrificed.

The Shambler awakens if the characters kill all of the cultists, or if all the victims are sacrificed.

Run Away! Run Away Now!

Taking on a whole village of cultists is one thing; a giant walking hill-monster is a whole other level of horrible doom. The guardian priests may decide that running away and coming back with, say, a dozen barrels of blasting powder and a large army is the better part of valour. The Shambler’s Shifting Ground power makes fleeing a risky proposition but if the players are really not prepared to fight the woken god, you can let a few of them flee to safety.

The Shambler Awakens

The hill quakes. Soil and stone tumble away from its flanks, ruddy tentacles erupt from the ground and the air shudders as lungs the size of cathedrals take their first breath in millennia. The top of the hill explodes in an eruption of dirt and as the Shambler’s maw opens. Limbs, multi-jointed and insectoid, heave the massive bulk of the hill up as the Shambler begins to move again like a tremendous beetle.

Fighting the Shambler: The Shambler extrudes one tentacle per victim sacrificed in the harvest. These tentacles stretch out and attack the characters, along with any surviving victims, followed by the cultists if no other food is available. Assume two tentacles per character at least. The tentacles grab their victims and lift them up towards the Shambler’s gaping maw on the monster’s back.

The Shambler’s body is virtually invulnerable. The only vulnerable points are its tentacles and its maw. If all the tentacles are severed or the maw is destroyed, the Shambler cannot feed and returns to dormancy.

The tentacles can be attacked normally but the best way to deal with them is to grab a magical scythe from one of the cultists and use that. Against the tentacles, the scythe can use the Sever Combat



Manoeuvre on a success, not just on a critical. Remember, there is one tentacle per victim sacrificed during the harvest.

The maw can only be attacked by a character who is either held suspended by one of the creature's tentacles, or who climbs the Shambler. Climbing the monster requires three successful Athletics rolls in a row.

The Cultists: The cultists may continue fighting with the guardian priests and/or harvesting victims when the Shambler awakens. Alternatively, if the characters are in trouble, then you can just have the cult break down in terror when their terrible god arises.

The Shifting Ground: The Shambler can spend a full round to alter the landscape around it. It could, for example, drag a fleeing character back towards it, or topple a building, or cause a pit to open under the characters. This can be used as an attack but is more suited for recapturing fleeing characters. Escaping shifting ground requires an Athletics test opposed by the Shambler's Manipulate Terrain ability.

The Dead God

If the characters manage to bring down the Shambler, the cultists flee in terror or collapse to the ground, weeping. The braver ones impale themselves on their scythes, just before the scythes lose their magic and melt away. The monks have just killed their god.

Any survivors from Heudreny dig themselves out of the earth; if the characters permit them to live, they burn down Yves-Sur-Fleuve and kill any remaining cultists by throwing them into the fires.

Philippe the Spy

This young cultist is the spy sent to watch Heudreny and who will follow the characters into the woods to find those who fled the destroyed village.

		1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP	Combat Actions	2
STR	11	1-3	Right Leg	1/4	Damage Modifier	-1d2
CON	13	4-6	Left Leg	1/4	Magic Points	13
SIZ	7	7-9	Abdomen	1/5	Movement	8m
INT	10	10-12	Chest	1/6	Strike Rank	+10 (+8 in armour)
POW	13	13-15	Right Arm	1/3		
DEX	9	16-18	Left Arm	1/3		
CHA	10	19-20	Head	-/4		

Armour: Leather

Equipment: Short Bow, Dagger

Notable Skills: Evade 30%, Lore (Regional) 40%, Perception 40%, Persistence 35%, Resilience 35%, Stealth 50%, Survival 20%



WEAPONS

Type	Size	Reach	Weapon Skill	Damage	AP/HP
Dagger	S	S	55%	1D4+1	6/8
Short Bow	—	—	50%	1D6	4/4

Cultists

These are the strongest members of the cult of the Shambler – less dangerous members should have one less Hit Point in each location, no Damage Bonus, no armour and use clubs or daggers instead of the magic scythes.

		1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP	<i>Combat Actions</i>	2
STR	15	1-3	Right Leg	1/6	<i>Damage Modifier</i>	+1d2
CON	13	4-6	Left Leg	1/6	<i>Magic Points</i>	10
SIZ	12	7-9	Abdomen	1/7	<i>Movement</i>	8m
INT	10	10-12	Chest	1/8	<i>Strike Rank</i>	+10 (+8 in armour)
POW	10	13-15	Right Arm	1/5		
DEX	10	16-18	Left Arm	1/5		
CHA	11	19-20	Head	-/6		

Armour: Leather

Equipment: Scythe or Dagger

Notable Skills: Athletics 40%, Brawn 30%, Perception 40%, Persistence 60%, Resilience 50%



WEAPONS

Type	Size	Reach	Weapon Skill	Damage	AP/HP
Scythe	L	L	65%	1D10+1	4/10
Dagger	S	S	55%	1D4+1	6/8

The Shambler

When fighting the Shambler, a character does not need to roll on the Hit Location table - he hits the nearest location on the monster. Use the random location only for spells or other effects that affect random locations.

The Shambler's tentacle attacks can use the Grab Combat Manoeuvre; a character struck by this manoeuvre is seized by the tentacle and lifted into the air. The character may still attack normally but cannot move. Escaping the grab requires an Unarmed Combat or Acrobatics test opposed by the Shambler's Unarmed Combat skill. If the character remains grabbed for three rounds, he will be dropped into the creature's maw.

		<i>Combat Actions</i>	1+1 per tentacle	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	40	<i>Damage Modifier</i>	Special	1	Rear Left Leg	6/15
CON	50	<i>Magic Points</i>	30	2	Rear Middle Leg	6/15
SIZ	100	<i>Movement</i>	8m	3	Rear Right Leg	6/15
INT	5	<i>Strike Rank</i>	+5	4-5	Belly	6/30
POW	30			6-12	Flank	6/30
DEX	5			13-16	Tentacles	3/10
CHA	20			17	Maw	4/12
<i>Armour: Rugose Hide</i>				18	Front Left Leg	6/15
<i>Traits: Formidable Natural Weapons</i>				19	Front Middle Leg	6/15
<i>Notable Skills: Manipulate Terrain 60%, Perception 40%, Persistence 60%, Resilience 130%, Unarmed 100%</i>				20	Front Right Leg	6/15

WEAPONS

Type	Size	Reach	Weapon Skill	Damage	AP/HP
Tentacle	H	VL	90%	1D10	As per Tentacle
Maw	H	S	75%	2D12	As per maw

Verse 5.5

THE FEAST OF FOOLS



The sea! The guardian priests can smell it in the air now and taste salt on the wind. They have followed the Loire and the trail of the Joyous One to Saint-Nazaire on the coast. Their quarry has its back to the ocean and nowhere else to go.

Except, of course, the sea.

The Joyous One intends to sail away and to cover its retreat it has expended much of its power to bring about the Feast of Fools. It has plunged half of Saint-Nazaire into madness, turning the social order upside down.

The Mummers

Ahead, the characters see a familiar caravan stopped by the roadside. Two exhausted horses stand near a brightly coloured wagon, laden with costumes, puppets and stacked scenery. A quartet of masked actors await the guardian priests.

One steps forward and speaks senatorially, addressing the characters. *'Friends! I bid you welcome to this, our last act. We poor players hope you have enjoyed our past performances and pray that you have learned – as others have – about the Word of God from our mystery plays.'*

'Our Lord Jesus Christ came to wash away the sins of mankind and for this the Romans crucified him on Calvary. Now he is come again to wash away the world's sorrows and once again he has been persecuted and tormented by the servants of Rome. Behold the King of Joy!'

The other three actors pull on ropes, hauling a cross upright. Nailed to this cross is another mummer, dressed in the black robes of the narrator of the other players. Could this be Jacques Taillebois, the possessed host of the Joyous One?

In truth, Jacques Taillebois is already in Saint-Nazaire. The figure on the cross is another mummer, inspired by the spirit's powers of insanity.

The mummer continues *'dying, he shall destroy sorrow. Rising again, he will bring about Heaven on Earth. All suffering and hardship will end, all rules shall be cast away. The prisoner will be freed from his chains, the mother from the yoke of her child, the soul from the burdens of mortality. Behold the Third Testament!'*

'Join us, ye sons of Rome! Accept joy into your hearts and ye shall be exalted above all others. What say you?'

The mummers are offering the guardian priests an alliance. If they join with the Joyous One, then he will reward them with great power in the kingdom that is to come.

If the characters accept (or pretend to accept) this offer, then the mummer continues. *'Our Lord has gone ahead but he awaits you in Saint-Nazaire. With the morning tide, he sails for Paradise and the secret kingdom of Solomon where death has no dominion – and you shall join him there. Drink of his blood, brothers!'* The mummer produces a wooden cup that contains a heady mixture of blood and wine. Any character foolish enough to drink this potion must make a Hard (-40%) Resilience test. Failure means that the character goes insane as if blessed by the Joyous One. A critical failure means the character is poisoned, suffering 2D6 damage to the abdomen. A success means the character is sane but temporarily disorientated, suffering a -20% penalty to all Skill Tests for 2d6 minutes. A critical success leaves the character unaffected.

The mummers then accompany the characters into Saint-Nazaire. They lead the characters to the church of St. Andrew in the middle of the town, where they meet the Abbot of Unreason. The ab-

bot invites the characters to join the pile of sacrifices on the altar, promising that those who sacrifice their lives here will be reborn in a perfected form in the world that is to come.

If, as is more likely, the characters refuse to serve the Joyous One, then it is time for a fight scene.

Kung Fu Stilt Jesus Kicks You In The Face

The four mummies draw swords from beneath their robes. In the same instant, there are alarming cracking sounds from the cross. The lower bar cracks and splits in two and the crucified mummer steps forward on the split cross as if it was a pair of stilts nailed to his feet. The smaller horizontal bar also breaks and a sword swings out of each arm of the cross. The guardian priest face four crazed actors with swords and one crazed actor nailed to a bizarre 10 foot wooden armature with hidden sword-blades. Roll for Initiative.

Once the characters defeat the mummies, they spot a thin plume of smoke rising from the west, from the general vicinity of Saint-Nazaire... then another and another. The town is burning.

Saint-Nazaire

The town of Saint-Nazaire is located at the mouth of the Loire river. There has been a town here for many hundreds of years; the dolmen in the heart of Saint-Nazaire bears an unsettling resemblance to the standing stones in Yves-Sur-Fleuve. The harbour is crowded with fishing boats and even a few merchant ships, although this is not one of the major trading ports of France.

The characters can see the town from a sizable distance away – the road crosses a low hill two miles away from the town's old walls. There are several fires burning near the harbour and a strange haze hangs over Saint-Nazaire. It is not a heat haze, nor is it smoke. It has a weird colourless hue, like oil on water. It makes the characters ill just looking at it.

A Town in Turmoil

When the characters arrive in Saint-Nazaire, they find a town in chaos. There is panic on the streets, terrified citizens praying for deliverance from the end of the world and a mob of armed peasants in the main square arguing about what to do. The characters can easily collar a passer-by and learn what is going on.

According to the rather confused accounts, the section of the city around the Church of Saint Andrew has gone mad. Everyone in that place is now a raving lunatic – and if you go too close, the Devils take you too! Knights and priests have tried to dispel this evil but they too are lost to the madness. Surely, the end of the world is at hand!

The madness apparently started during the night; people heard shouts and screams and then the fires began. One ship, the *Angel of Biscay*, even left harbour during the night, using the burning buildings as torches to light its way out to sea! No-one is sure what to do; some people advocate burning down the afflicted region, others want to call the bishop or the Count or anyone else who can take charge.

Brother Corentin

While the characters are pushing through the panicked crowds in the main square of Saint-Nazaire, a black-robed monk emerges from the press of people and whispers to one of the characters. '*Brother, we must speak. Follow me.*'

Corentin is a fellow guardian priest from the Priory of Guérande, a short distance up the coast. He leads the characters into a safe-house overlooking the square. There are healing draughts and other alchemical devices and weapons here, if the characters need to refresh their Assets. He explains that he and several other monks were dispatched from Corentin when word reached them of the events in Troyes, to search for the Heresiarch.

Last night, he detected a powerful source of chaotic magic with a Hoffman Device. It must have been the Joyous One. Before Corentin could intervene, the Joyous One swept through the town and loosed... well, something on the harbour quarter. It is something like the Feast of Fools that is celebrated in the winter, when children are allowed to behave like adults and a young boy or deacon is mockingly crowned 'Abbot of Unreason' in the church – but that is nothing more than raucous merriment. What Corentin saw near the harbour was utter insanity.

He has mapped the edge of the afflicted zone. It appears to be centred on the Church of St. Andrew – either the Joyous One is there or else the spirit's magic is centred there. Either way, it must be ended. He suspects that the spirit has already fled Saint-Nazaire – the ship that left harbour last night, the *Angel of Biscay*, was within the afflicted area, so the crew should have been affected by the madness.

Corentin will give the characters whatever help they need. He can either accompany them into the realm of madness, or serve as a messenger if they think the best approach is to contact the Priory for help. He can also arrange for a ship so they can pursue the Joyous One.

Playing Corentin: Corentin is a veteran guardian priest of the Third Degree; his thinning grey beard and haggard features bear testament to many years' service in the Order. For several years, he has patrolled the coasts of Brittany and Normandy and has even gone deep into the Moorish territory.

He will not volunteer this information but there is a reason that an experienced guardian priest like Corentin was given such a simple task as watching for signs of the Joyous One. Two years ago, Corentin and four other monks attempted to bring down a demon-worshipping cult; four of the monks died and Corentin has spent the last two years recovering in the monastery at Guérande. He is still weak and uncertain, and is unwilling to risk failure once more, not after what he saw last time...

The Abyss of Madness

The streets surrounding the church of St. Andrew are under the effect of the Joyous One's blessing. The harbour district near the church is a warren of alleyways, narrow streets, warehouses and dockside inns. Under normal circumstances, it would take the characters only a few minutes to walk to the church.

These are not normal circumstances. The air is like broken glass, diffracting the light in bizarre ways and turning the cityscape into a disjointed patchwork of twisted wood and stone. The streets are warped and the buildings loom as though they are about to topple down or fall into the sea.

The characters must make Persistence tests as they travel through the abyss of madness. Call for a test after each encounter; if a test is failed, the character slips into madness.

Roll on the Hallucination table to determine what the character believes or come up with something suitable to the character's personality.

The duration of these bout of madness increases with each failure; the first bout lasts for 1d6 minutes, the second 1d6 hours, the third 1d6 days and so on.

Truly Random Encounters

The journey through the streets should feel like something out of a Hieronymous Bosch painting. Everywhere, the characters see the fruits of the spirit's madness. There, a couple rut on the street like animals; there, a child tears strips of flesh from the carcass of a dead cat and gobbles them down; above, six corpses hang from a window, all hung from the same rope like beads on a string. There is a cacophony of screams, shouts and discordant singing.

Roll (1d6)	Madness
1	Paranoia: The character believes everyone around them is plotting against them. Get them before they get you!
2	Phobia: The character develops an overwhelming terror of something or someone nearby. Kill it! Kill it with fire!
3	Liberation: The character is freed from all emotional and social restrictions. Do as you will! Take please as you will!
4	Religious Terror: The character believes that God has abandoned him and that everything is hopeless.
5	Flashbacks: The character has a flashback to some past event and believes he is reliving that incident.
6	Intense Emotion: the character's emotions become wildly intensified.

Roll (1d6)	Encounter
1	A madman rushes up to the characters screaming 'I'm God! I'm God!' As soon as he gets close enough, he draws a knife and maniacally stabs the characters.
2	The characters come upon a weeping woman dressed in a hooded robe, surrounded by the corpses of three children, all of whom have their necks broken. She is holding another child tightly. When the characters approach, she thrusts this fourth child into their arms and begs the characters to take him away. When she does this, the characters can see that her face and arms are covered in bite marks and scratches, as if the other children tried to eat her.
3	In one inn, a trio of sailors are drinking. They have dragged barrels of ale up from the cellar and hacked them open with an axe. One sailor's stomach has burst from the sheer amount of drink; a slurry of intestines, blood and ale covers the floor.
4	The characters pass a burning building. A crowd of people stand outside, fascinated by the beauty of the flames. They have stood there so long that their skin has blistered. If anyone tries to intervene, the crowd attempts to throw the character into the flames.
5	A wagon rattles down the street towards the characters. It is drawn by a team of naked men. On the wagon lies the corpse of a horse.
6	A trio of merchants, hagling over prices for insubstantial goods. One merchant wants to buy the sound of the sky; another claims he has got a special offer on the death of fish and the third is eager to trade in worthy thoughts of heroes.

If Corentin of Guérande is with the characters, then at one point he hallucinates that the PCs are the companions he left to die when he battled the demon cult. He screams ‘No! You’re dead! You’re all dead! The demons took you! I’ll kill you all!’ The characters can talk him down if they remind him that all this is a hallucination.

The GM should also include encounters based on the characters’ own fears and dreams. Bring back especially memorable NPCs from past adventures – for example, if the characters failed to rescue Rene from the Parisian ghouls, then you could bring him back in a hallucination.

The Feast of Fools

At the heart of the afflicted region is the Church of St. Andrew, patron saint of fishermen and sailors. This church is clearly the centre of the weird sorcery – eddies of magical energy and cascading sheets of static electricity swirl around the building.

The church is a sturdy gothic building made of grey stone, topped by an impressive spire. It was recently rebuilt and is the pride of the whole town.

Directly opposite the church is a large three-storey house, one of the biggest and newest in Saint-Nazaire. This was the home of a wealthy merchant, Pierre de Nazaire, who made his fortune trading with the Norman kings of England. Outside the church is a crowd of three dozen deranged madmen, who have just finished looting Pierre’s house. Some are now dressed in Pierre’s fine clothes; others wear gowns that once belonged to his wife. Still others wear tattered bloody fragments of Pierre’s skin, which they tore off his still-living body. The remains of Pierre and his wife are now turning on a spit over a bonfire made of wooden statues torn from the outside of the church.

Anyone who enters the open area in front of the church who is not obviously one of the mad revelers will be attacked by this mob. To get to the church, the characters need to either distract the mob, disguise themselves as madmen, or find an alternative way into the church – say, by leaping from rooftop to rooftop or swimming along the docks.

If the characters are forced to fight the mob, then remember the rules for multiple opponents. There is such a press of madmen in the mob, clambering over each other to claw at the characters, that each guardian priest will be attacked by eight or more foes at once. Unless the players are able to use Evade to stay clear of the mob, they will almost certainly be dragged down and killed.

Into The Church

Once the characters gain entry to the Church of St. Andrew, they find a truly horrific scene. The walls of the church run red with blood and the floor is ankle-deep in gore and littered with discarded knives. The altar is hidden beneath a pile of sacrificed corpses, both human and animal. It appears as though madmen ran into the church and impaled themselves on their own knives atop this ghastly pyramid of offerings. Lurid green flames run over the pile of bodies but do not consume them.

Seated on a throne atop the pile of sacrifices is a young boy, dressed in priestly vestments that are clearly much too large for him. This is the boy kidnapped from Provins weeks ago; he is now the Abbot of Unreason, the lynchpin of the Joyous One’s spell. Tendrils of magical energy wreath around his skull.

The Abbot of Unreason greets the characters. ‘I am the Abbot of Unreason, the vicar of joy. My master has gone ahead but he left me to wait for you. Join our ending hymn of praise and find fulfilment. I beg you, good monks, to take up a knife and take your place in the congregation of the joyful people.’ He indicates the pile of bodies behind him, suggesting that the characters should sacrifice themselves.

If a character approaches the Abbot, the boy raises his hand. *'Kill yourself where you stand, brother, and my servants will throw you on the pile.'*

If they act threateningly towards the abbot, then call for Initiative rolls and jump to *Killing the Church*. A character who wins Initiative and can kill the Abbot before he reacts can avoid a lengthy and vicious battle with the hallucinations of *Killing the Church*.

Defeating the Abbot of Unreason: There are several ways that the characters can defeat the Abbot of Unreason:

- By slaying him in combat – see *Killing the Church*.
- By slaying him with a surprise attack, either by hitting him with a ranged weapon or sneaking up while pretending to accept self-sacrifice.
- Disrupting the Joyous One's magic with a spell or holy relic.
- Taking the throne of the Abbot and becoming the new lynchpin for the spell. This will drive the character incurably insane but does save the boy.

Killing the Church

If, as is likely, the characters end up attacking the Abbot of Unreason, then the church undergoes a bizarre transformation. This whole fight is a hallucination but the characters have no way of knowing this until afterwards. A character killed in the hallucination believes he has died – after the hallucination, a 'dead' character may make a Persistence test to cling to life at the cost of one CON. A character who fails this Persistence test dies of shock.

Read the following as the hallucination begins:

When you draw steel against the Abbot of Unreason, the whole church of St. Andrew quakes violently. The green fires leap up to surround the young boy. You are all knocked off your feet and find yourself sliding down the slick bloody floor and right out the front doors of the church. The ground continues to shake as the church... unfolds. Flying buttresses become gigantic legs of stone. The doors slam shut, then buckle outwards, heaving like a pair of titanic lungs. The church spire seems to topple forward for a moment, then bends like the neck of a tremendous bird. The top of the spire splits in two, revealing a row of jagged stone teeth.

You watch in horror as the church becomes a stone monster, a crocodile-church that rears up to devour you. The belfry glows with raging green fire as the Abbot takes his place as the creature's brain.

Fighting The Stone Monster: The Church of St. Andrew can stomp on characters or bite at them with the spire.

Characters can scale the walls of the building with a Hard (-40%) Athletics test and then clamber across the roof with an Athletics test to oppose the church's attempts to shake them off. Alternatively, a character who is targeted by the church's spire bite attack can make a Difficult (-20%) Athletics test to leap into the belfry when the opportunity arises.

To kill the church, the characters need to either destroy its physical form (virtually impossible) or kill or disable the Abbot of Unreason in the belfry. The abbot can only be attacked by a character who climbs into the belfry, or with an extremely accurate ranged attack (-60% to ranged attacks to avoid the church's armour).

The Abbot of Unreason has 12 Hit Points – do not worry about Hit Locations for a such a fragile and immobile target.

If the characters are unable to defeat the animated church, a benevolent GM might permit the players to use Persistence tests to see through the illusion and to realise that they are still in the church and its transformation into a monster is just a hallucination.

Its stomp attacks are much too big to be parried; they can only be Evaded. The creature can make up to two Stomp attacks per round but each attack must be made against a different target.

After the Battle

Once the Abbot is defeated, the dream fades. The characters are back in the Church of St. Andrew, surrounded by blood and corpses – but the aura of madness has dissipated. The way to the harbour is clear.

Soon afterwards, more monks from Guérande arrive to take charge of the town; witnesses will be told to keep silent or else be given a quiet end. The whole incident will eventually be blamed on the sins of the greedy merchants and the lack of piety of the townsfolk.

Pursuing the Joyous One

Divination spells or a Hoffman Device reading shows that the Joyous One is at sea, to the south-west. The Order can provide a swift ship, the *Harrower*, to pursue the spirit who must be aboard the *Angel of Biscay*. The *Harrower* sails out of Saint-Nazaire and chases the slower ship along the French coast. Two days out of port, the characters spot the sails of their quarry. After another three hours, the *Harrower* is nearly alongside the rival ship.

A storm explodes out of nowhere. Both ships are tossed like matchsticks on a raging ocean. There is a sudden impact and then...

Paradise

The characters awaken on a stretch of golden sand. They are on the beach of a beautiful island. A lush forest... no, it is more like a garden... covers the island. Birds sing in the trees and animals gambol amongst them. The lion lies down with the lamb. This place is paradise.

The characters can walk inland to the centre of this garden. There, they find themselves in a clearing with two trees – the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life. No fruit grow from these trees; instead, jars grow from both. These jars are identical to the one the characters saw at the Chateau du Paynes, the one that contained the Joyous One.

Standing in front of the trees is the Joyous One. He casts back his hood, to reveal his features. The sight is horrific. The already-frail body of the leper is unable to contain the spirit's power. Taillebois's flesh is rotting from the inside. His face is covered in gaping wounds and more chunks of skin flake off when he speaks. The characters can even see parts of the skull through the withered skin.

'In Tyre and Babylon, they called me the Joyous One. I seek only to bring joy to all living souls. My powers are exhausted now. I can resist you no longer.'

I offer you, instead, your heart's desire. King Solomon locked me away in a jar in the 53rd year of his reign and he intended to put me in the tomb with the rest of the imprisoned spirits. I know where that tomb is – and there are hundreds of spirits there, every one of them greater than I. They will serve you. With the power of Solomon's tomb, you can reconquer the Holy Land, drive away the Moslems, become kings of all the world – whatever you desire can be yours forever!

This body is dying. All I desire is another body, to continue living in this world. If you give me that body, I will bring you to Solomon's tomb. Will none of you give yourselves to me?'

If a character accepts this bargain, then the Joyous One leaps into that character's body. The possessing spirit is exhausted and will take several weeks to recover its power, so the new host has a few

weeks of grace before the Joyous One tries to take over the body entirely. The spirit may still lead the characters to Solomon's tomb but its ultimate goal is to free the other trapped spirits and bring about an age of anarchy and madness.

If the characters refuse this bargain, then the spirit begs that they put it out of its misery. This is a lie, as anyone who read the papers from the Chateau du Paynes or succeeds in a Difficult (-20%) Lore (Occult) or Hard (-40%) Insight test realises. If the spirit could leave the body voluntarily, it would. If it is lingering despite being in pain, then it must be trapped within the flesh until released by an outside agency. The spirit is trying to trick the characters.

If they refuse to aid it or to kill it, the illusion fades and the Joyous One attacks for the last time.

An End to Joy

The spirit desperately tries to get the PCs to kill it, so it can escape from the rotting corpse of Taillebois. The illusion of paradise vanishes, replaced by the reality – the characters' ship was driven into the side of the *Angel of Biscay* and both vessels are sinking. The bodies of drowned men float in the water around the sinking wreck. The footing is treacherous as the two mortally wounded ships break and grind against each other.

The Joyous One resembles a tattered skeleton at this point. Rags of blackened flesh hang from its bones and it leaps as though it weighs next to nothing. Its eyes burn with utter insanity and a fierce joy and its clawed hands are sharper and stronger than knives.

In the battle, emphasise the desperate, suicidal nature of the foe. The Joyous One wants to provoke the characters into killing it. It might, for example, concentrate its attacks on the weakest, most vulnerable PC, in the hopes that the others stab it in the back. It might subject characters to illusions, appearing as their most hated enemies or otherwise trying to trick them into murdering it. If all else fails, it begs and screams to be released from this prison of flesh.

The Joyous One's greatest fear is being left to rot in another prison with even less chance of escape than its jar. If, say, Taillebois' body was pushed overboard, then the spirit would be trapped for centuries until every scrap of bone dissolved. Without an outside force to suddenly sever its connection to the flesh, it is bound there as long as any part of the anchor body exists.

If the characters ally with the Joyous One: If one of the guardian priests actually permits the spirit to possess him, then the spirit leaps into his body. It is not yet strong enough to take over but it will whisper in his ear, tempting him to flee the Order and take the power of the Tomb of Solomon for himself. If the Order finds out that the monks are harbouring an evil spirit, the rest of the PCs will be disciplined and the host will be imprisoned in the care of *Ex Malo Bonum*.

If the characters free the Joyous One: Then the spirit flees back to the mainland on the wind. Unless the characters have *Mystic Vision* or check with a divination spell, they may not realise that the spirit has vanished. Either way, it is beyond their reach – the Order may recapture the Joyous One again in some future battle, or the spirit might make its way to the Holy Land and *The Tomb of Solomon*.

If the characters capture or imprison the Joyous One: Then the Order will take custody of the spirit. Their interrogation of the Joyous One can put the characters on the trail of the *Tomb of Solomon*. **If the Joyous One's body is trapped:** Then the spirit is once again imprisoned for centuries, just as it was before the Templars found it in the Holy Land.

The Mummers

These are the madmen who have followed the Joyous One all the way from Troyes; they are inspired lunatics, devoted to their master. They believe that anyone who dies in the service of Joy will be rewarded with an eternity of infinitely changing pleasure.

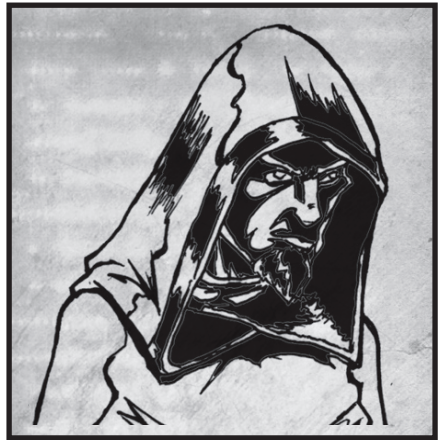
In combat, they leap and roll and dodge, relying on their physical prowess rather than armour to evade blows.

		1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP	<i>Combat Actions</i>	3
STR	16	1-3	Right Leg	-/5	<i>Damage Modifier</i>	+1d2
CON	15	4-6	Left Leg	-/5	<i>Magic Points</i>	13
SIZ	10	7-9	Abdomen	-/6	<i>Movement</i>	10m
INT	13	10-12	Chest	-/7	<i>Strike Rank</i>	+16
POW	13	13-15	Right Arm	-/4		
DEX	18	16-18	Left Arm	-/4		
CHA	18	19-20	Head	-/5		

Armour: None

Equipment: Warsword and dagger

Notable Skills: Acrobatics 75%, Athletics 60%, Dance 50%, Evade 65%, Persistence 90%, Resilience 50%, Unarmed 65%



WEAPONS

Type	Size	Reach	Weapon Skill	Damage	AP/HP
Warsword	M	M	90%	1D8	6/10
Dagger	S	S	90%	1D4+1	6/8

The Crucified Mummer

This particular madman had the strength and stamina to endure crucifixion... and the sense of balance to use the fake cross as a fighting platform!

Stilt/Arm Locations: If either stilt location is reduced to zero Hit Points, it is broken and the mummer's movement is halved. If either cross arm location is reduced to zero Hit Points, the mummer cannot use the sword in that arm.

		<i>Combat Actions</i>	1+1 per tentacle	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	40			1	Right Stilt	4/8
CON	50	<i>Damage Modifier</i>	Special	2-3	Right Leg	-/7
SIZ	100	<i>Magic Points</i>	30	4	Left Stilt	4/8
INT	5	<i>Movement</i>	8m	5-6	Left Leg	-/7
POW	30	<i>Strike Rank</i>	+5	7-9	Abdomen	-/8
DEX	5			10-12	Chest	-/9
CHA	20			13	Right Cross Arm	4/6
<i>Armour:</i> None <i>Equipment:</i> Two Longswords <i>Notable Skills:</i> Acrobatics 50%, Athletics 80%, Brawl 70%, Persistence 70%, Resilience 75%				14-15	Right Arm	-/6
				16	Left Cross Arm	4/6
				17-18	Left Arm	-/6
				19-20	Head	-/7

WEAPONS

Type	Size	Reach	Weapon Skill	Damage	AP/HP
Longsword	M	VL	85%	1D8	6/12
Longsword	M	VL	85%	1D8	6/12

Brother Cœrentin

		1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP	Combat Actions	2
STR	14	1-3	Right Leg	2/6	Damage Modifier	+1d2
CON	12	4-6	Left Leg	2/6	Magic Points	14
SIZ	12	7-9	Abdomen	2/7	Movement	8m
INT	10	10-12	Chest	2/8	Strike Rank	+10 (+7 in armour)
POW	14	13-15	Right Arm	2/5		
DEX	10	16-18	Left Arm	2/5		
CHA	9	19-20	Head	-/6		

Armour: Leather

Equipment: Crusader Blade x 2 (6), Dust of Revelation (4), Panacea x 2 (6)

Notable Skills: Athletics 51%, Brawn 48%, Culture (Norman) 30%, Insight 50%, Language (French) 80%, Language (Latin) 40%, Lore (Christian Theology) 50%, Lore (Occult) 65%, Lore (Regional) 30%, Mechanisms 45%, Perception 80%, Persistence 88%, Resilience 92%, Stealth 80%, Survival 80%, Track 70%, Unarmed 50%



WEAPONS

Type	Size	Reach	Weapon Skill	Damage	AP/HP
Crusader Blade	M	M	106%	1D6+1	6/8

Common Madman

		1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP	<i>Combat Actions</i>	2
<i>STR</i>	11	1-3	Right Leg	-/5	<i>Damage Modifier</i>	+0
<i>CON</i>	12	4-6	Left Leg	-/5	<i>Magic Points</i>	10
<i>SIZ</i>	10	7-9	Abdomen	-/6	<i>Movement</i>	8m
<i>INT</i>	6	10-12	Chest	-/7	<i>Strike Rank</i>	+8
<i>POW</i>	10	13-15	Right Arm	-/4		
<i>DEX</i>	10	16-18	Left Arm	-/4		
<i>CHA</i>	6	19-20	Head	-/6		

Armour: None

Equipment: Improvised Weapons

Notable Skills: Athletics 30%, Perception 30%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 30%, Unarmed 30%



WEAPONS

<i>Type</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Reach</i>	<i>Weapon Skill</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>AP/HP</i>
Dagger	S	S	45%	1D4+1	6/8
Club	M	S	45%	1D6	4/4

The Church of St Andrew

		<i>Combat Actions</i>	3	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	60	<i>Damage Modifier</i>	Special	1-2	Right Rear Buttress	10/28
CON	80	<i>Magic Points</i>	0	3-4	Left Rear Buttress	10/28
SIZ	60	<i>Movement</i>	12m	5-9	Nave	10/40
INT	0	<i>Strike Rank</i>	+2	10-13	Transcept	10/60
POW	0			14-15	Right Front Buttress	10/28
DEX	3			16-17	Left Front Buttress	10/28
CHA	10			18-19	Belfry	10/28
<p><i>Armour:</i> Made of Stone <i>Traits:</i> Formidable Natural Weapons <i>Notable Skills:</i> Dance 1%, Perception 25%, Persistence 100%, Resilience 200%</p>				20	The Abbot of Unreason	-/12

WEAPONS

Type	Size	Reach	Weapon Skill	Damage	AP/HP
Stomp	H	VL	70%	3D12	As per leg
Stomp Attacks can only be Evaded, not parried.					
Shake	Special			50%	2D6
If the church makes a Shake attack, all characters climbing on the church must make opposed Acrobatics rolls. Failure means the character falls off the roof and takes 2d6 damage.					
Bite	H	VL	70%	3D6	As per belfry

Jacques Taillebois, the Joyous One

The Hit Points, Magic Points and attack damage of the Joyous One depend on the actions of the characters. If they failed to complete any of the previous chapters successfully by eliminating the Joyous One's worshippers, then modify the Joyous One as per the Table of Joyful Doom.

		1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP	Combat Actions	3
STR	20	1-3	Right Leg	2/6*	Damage Modifier	+1D4
CON	19	4-6	Left Leg	2/6*	Magic Points	*
SIZ	11	7-9	Abdomen	2/7*	Movement	8m
INT	15	10-12	Chest	2/8*	Strike Rank	+19 (+16 in armor)
POW	25	13-15	Right Arm	2/5*		
DEX	23	16-18	Left Arm	2/5*		
CHA	20	19-20	Head	2/6*		

Armour: Leather

Equipment: Scythe or Dagger

Traits: Spirit, Worshippers, Blessing of the Joyous One, Inspiration of the Joyous One, Formidable Natural Weapons

Notable Skills: Acrobatics 100%, Athletics 90%, Evade 100%, Influence 120%, Insight 90%, Lore (History) 90%, Persistence 70%, Possession 80%, Resilience 70%, Spectral Combat 90%, Stealth 90%

WEAPONS

Type	Size	Reach	Weapon Skill	Damage	AP/HP
Claw	M	M	130%	1D6*	As per arm

TABLE OF JOYFUL DOOM

Adventures Failed	0	1	2	3	4
Magic Points Remaining	5	10	15	20	25
Hit Points	+0	+1 per location	+2 per location	+3 per location	+4 per location
Claw Damage	1D6	1D8	1D10	2D6	2D10